

STORY BY KYO SHIRODAIRA
ART BY CHASHIBA KATASE

IN/SPECTRE

1



STORY: KYO SHIRODAIRA
MANGA: CHASHIBA KATASE

A black and white manga-style illustration of two characters. On the left is a young man with dark, spiky hair, wearing a dark jacket over a light shirt and dark pants. He has a serious expression and is looking towards the viewer. On the right is a young woman with light-colored, wavy hair, wearing a light-colored dress with a dark collar and a large, light-colored hat. She is looking towards the viewer with a slight smile. The background features diagonal lines. The title 'IN/SPECTRE' is written in a large, stylized, outlined font across the middle of the image.

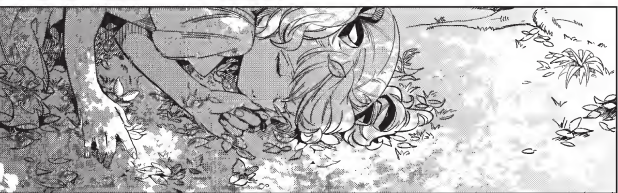
IN/SPECTRE

NOVEL VERSION CHARACTER DESIGNS
HIRO KIYOHARA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: "ONE EYE, ONE LEG"	3
CHAPTER 2: "RUMORS OF THE STEEL MAN"	87
BONUS MANGA	166

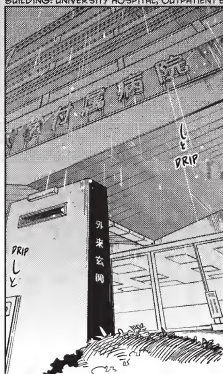




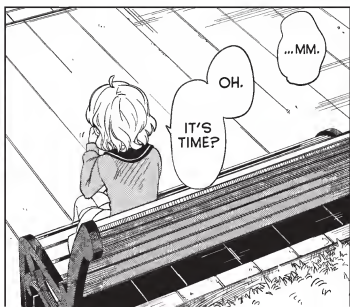
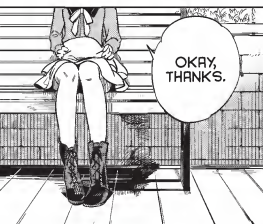
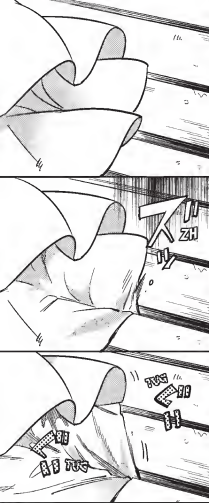


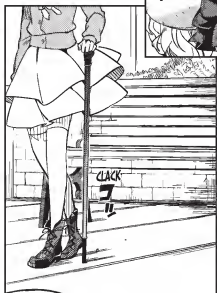
PLEASE
BE OUR
GOD OF
WISDOM.

BUILDING: UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, OUTPATIENT ENTRANCE



CHAPTER 1:
"ONE EYE, ONE LEG"







IT SOUNDS
LIKE KURŌ-
KUN REALLY
DID BREAK
UP WITH HIS
GIRLFRIEND.

WHISPER



OH!
ONE
MORE
THING.

SHUFFLE



I'M SORRY,
I JUST CAN'T
BELIEVE IT.

You're
like a
little
doll

THE
TOP

UP
FAT



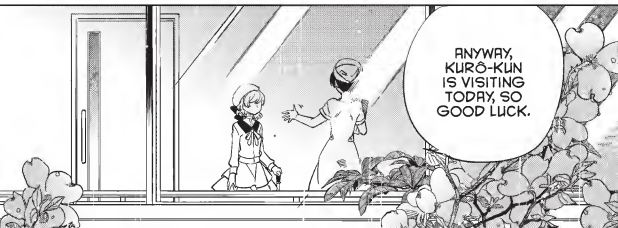
SHE'S A YEAR
OLDER THAN HE
IS, AND SHE'S
GRADUATING
COLLEGE THIS
YEAR. SHE
FOUND A JOB
IN ANOTHER
PREFECTURE.

I WONDER
IF THAT'S
WHY THEY'RE
SPLITTING
UP.

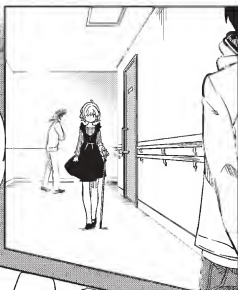
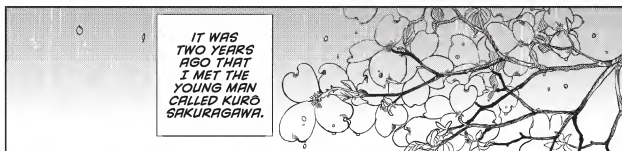


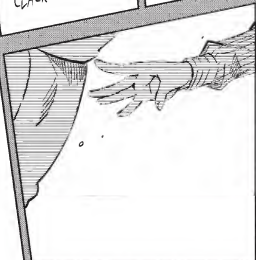
I
COULDN'T
GET ANY
DETAILS,
BUT I
THINK IT'S
TRUE.

REALLY?
EVEN THOUGH
THEY WERE
ENGAGED?!



ANYWAY,
KURŌ-KUN
IS VISITING
TODAY, SO
GOOD LUCK.











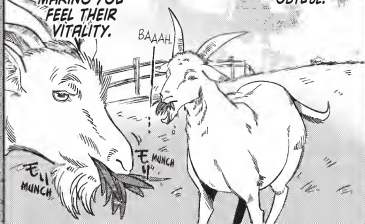
HE WAS
20 YEARS
OLD AT
THE TIME.

THAT WAS
KURŌ
SAKURAGAWA.



BUT THEY
HAVE A
STRANGE
WAY OF
MAKING YOU
FEEL THEIR
VITALITY.

SCRAWNY AND
OBLIVIOUS, THEY
SEEM TO SPEND
THEIR WHOLE LIVES
MUNCHING AWAY
ON GRASS,
ETERNALLY
OBTUSE.

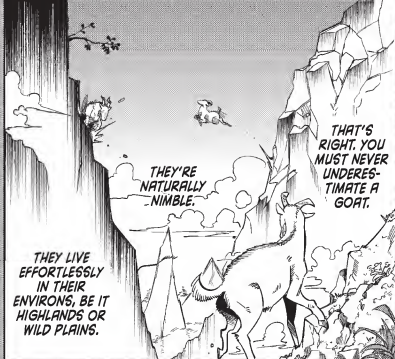


HE'S
LIKE A
GOAT.





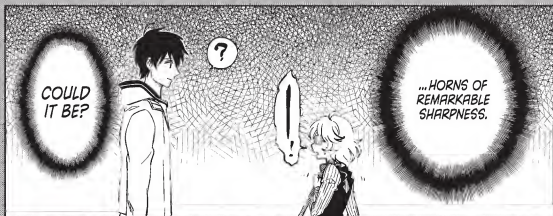
AND, SOME BREEDS OF GOAT ARE EQUIPPED WITH TWO RIGID, ONI-LIKE HORNS.



THEY'RE NATURALLY NIMBLE.

THEY LIVE EFFORTLESSLY IN THEIR ENVIRONS, BE IT HIGHLANDS OR WILD PLAINS.

THAT'S RIGHT. YOU MUST NEVER UNDERESTIMATE A GOAT.



COULD IT BE?

...HORNS OF REMARKABLE SHARPNESS.



UM...

KURŌ-KUN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED.



COULD THIS BE WHAT THEY CALL "LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT"?





OH, IT'S
POSSIBLE
SHE'S HIS
LITTLE
SISTER...

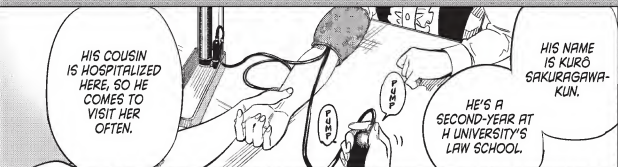


...WHY ARE YOU
APOLOGIZING?



IS SHE
HIS BIG
SISTER?

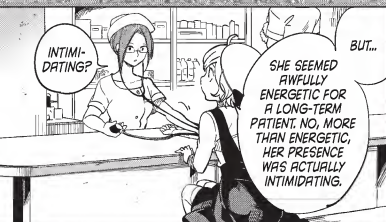
A
RELATIVE?



HIS COUSIN
IS HOSPITALIZED
HERE, SO HE
COMES TO
VISIT HER
OFTEN.

HIS NAME
IS KURŌ
SAKURAGAWA-
KUN.

HE'S A
SECOND-YEAR AT
H UNIVERSITY'S
LAW SCHOOL.



INTIMI-
DATING?

BUT...

SHE SEEMED
AWFULLY
ENERGETIC FOR
A LONG-TERM
PATIENT. NO, MORE
THAN ENERGETIC,
HER PRESENCE
WAS ACTUALLY
INTIMIDATING.



NO, SHE'S
NOT HIS
COUSIN.

OH.



SHE
COULD
BE

HIS COUSIN?
IS SHE A TALL
WOMAN?

GASP
HIS
COUSIN
!!



AND I HEARD THAT WHEN SHE WENT OFF TO COLLEGE, KURŌ-KUN DECIDED HE HAD TO GO TO THE SAME ONE.

THEY'VE BEEN DATING SINCE HIGH SCHOOL.



...GIRL-FRIEND.

THE GIRL WHO'S ALWAYS WITH HIM IS SAKI-SAN. SHE'S A YEAR OLDER THAN HE IS, BUT SHE'S HIS...

COUSIN

CRACK



SORRY, KOTOKO-CHAN, BUT I THINK KURŌ-KUN IS OUT OF YOUR REACH.

HE'S SO GOOD-LOOKING, AND SO FRIENDLY, EVEN SOME OF THE NURSES HAVE APPROACHED HIM.



...OOOHHA...

FENIN



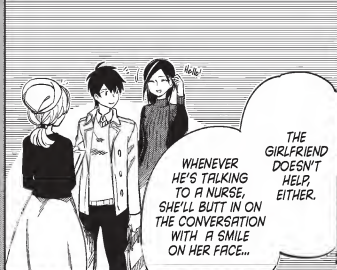
WELL ISN'T THAT DELIGHTFUL.

MRRK...

BUT HE'S ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT HIS GIRLFRIEND WITH A HAPPY LOOK ON HIS FACE.



...AND WHISK HIM AWAY BEFORE THINGS CAN GET AWKWARD.



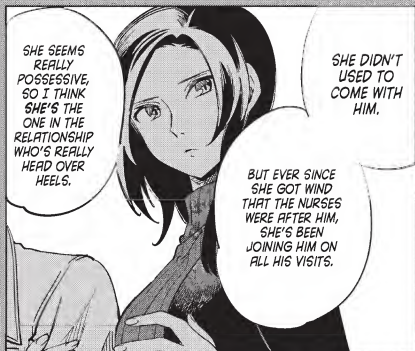
WHENEVER HE'S TALKING TO A NURSE, SHE'LL BUTT IN ON THE CONVERSATION WITH A SMILE ON HER FACE...

THE GIRLFRIEND DOESN'T HELP, EITHER.



ARE YOU SAYING I DON'T HAVE A CHANCE?

は
STAND



SHE SEEMS REALLY POSSESSIVE, SO I THINK SHE'S THE ONE IN THE RELATIONSHIP WHO'S REALLY HEAD OVER HEELS.

SHE DIDN'T USED TO COME WITH HIM.

BUT EVER SINCE SHE GOT WIND THAT THE NURSES WERE AFTER HIM, SHE'S BEEN JOINING HIM ON ALL HIS VISITS.



WELL,

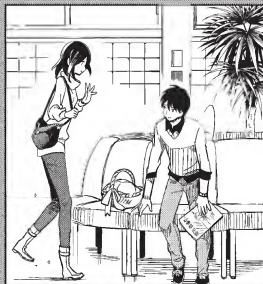
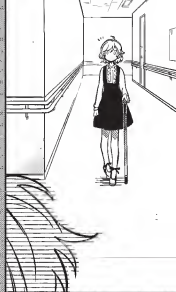
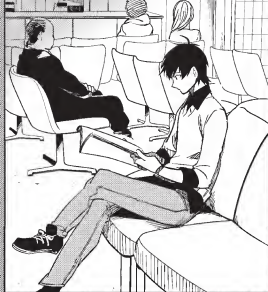
STRANGER THINGS HAVE HAPPENED, SO THERE'S NO NEED TO GIVE UP ENTIRELY.



IF SHE'S KURŌ-KUN'S TYPE, I'M NOT SURE HE'LL EVER SEE YOU AS A PROSPECT.

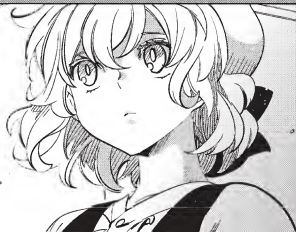
Just do
what you
want
over!

KLONG
ゴ



I'D
WATCH
HIM, BUT
I COULD
NEVER BRING
MYSELF
TO TALK
TO HIM.

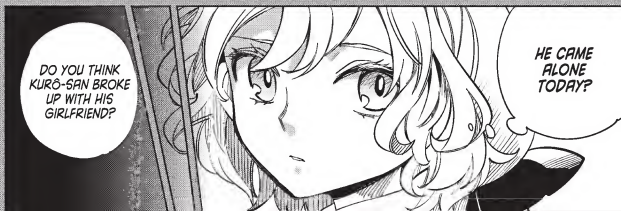
I WOULD
SEE HIM
AT THE
HOSPITAL
TWO OR
THREE
TIMES A MONTH.

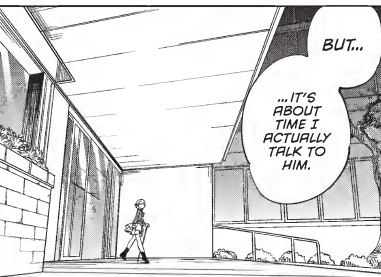
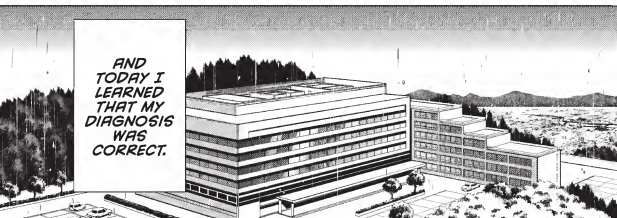


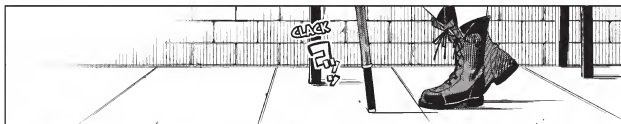


AND, THEN,
ALMOST
TWO YEARS
AFTER
OUR FIRST
ENCOUNTER
...









UMM

HELLO.
IT'S BEEN
A WHILE.





ABOUT
TWO YEARS
AGO,
AT THIS
HOSPITAL.



HAVE YOU
FORGOTTEN
THE FACE OF
THE WOMAN
WHO SAVED
YOUR LIFE?

AND
YOU
ARE?



UNFORTUNATELY,
I DON'T THINK
I'VE BEEN IN ANY
LIFE-THREATENING
DANGER FOR
ABOUT TEN
YEARS NOW.



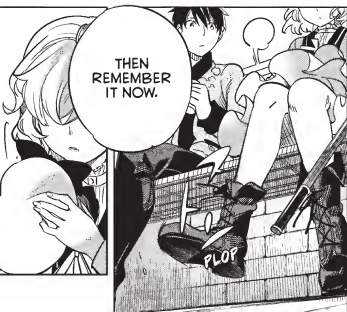
*you said
you'd
remember.*

YOU
IDENTIFY
GIRLS BY
THEIR
HEADWEAR?

BUT
THAT GIRL
WASN'T
WEARING
A BERET.

WHEN I
FELL OVER
BACK-
WARDS AND
ALMOST HIT
MY HEAD!

OH!



THEN
REMEMBER
IT NOW.



SORRY.
I'M NOT
GOOD AT
REMEM-
BERING
GIRLS'
FACES.

BESIDES, IF I
DID REMEMBER
ANY GIRLS, IT
WOULD MAKE
SAKI MAD.

02
TWITCH



IT MEANS
"CHILD OF
THE HARP,
OLD AS THE
ROCKS."

MY NAME
IS KOTOKO
IWANAGA.

I
RECENTLY
TURNED
17.

I'M
FULL OF
ENERGY.



YOU
WON'T
FORGET,
SINCE
I HEAR
YOU'VE
BROKEN UP
WITH SAKI-
SAN...



IN-
DEED.



OKAY.
I WON'T
FORGET
THIS TIME.



AND YOU'VE BEEN COMING TO SEE HER FOR AT LEAST THREE YEARS.

SUCH AS, YOUR NAME IS KURŌ SAKURAGAWA, YOU'RE NOW 22 YEARS OLD, YOU HAVE A COUSIN WHO HAS BEEN STAYING IN THIS HOSPITAL,



SUDDENLY I'M NOT SO SURE ABOUT THE PRIVACY POLICIES AT THIS HOSPITAL.



IT IS DUBIOUS, ISN'T IT?

IS THAT HOW IT IS?

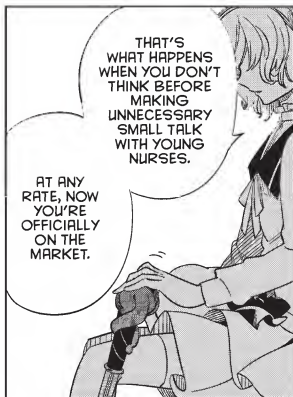
I'M TOLD THAT THEY ARE UNDER NO OBLIGATION TO EXTEND THOSE POLICIES TO VISITORS.



NOBODY'S
EVER
KEPT IN THE
HOSPITAL
FOR
ANYTHING
PLEASANT.

YOU
DON'T
WANT TO
KNOW.

BUT THEY NEVER
TOLD ME THE NAME
OF YOUR COUSIN,
OR WHY SHE'S
HERE OR ANY OF
THAT SORT OF
INFORMATION.



THAT'S
WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN YOU DON'T
THINK BEFORE
MAKING
UNNECESSARY
SMALL TALK
WITH YOUNG
NURSES.

AT ANY
RATE, NOW
YOU'RE
OFFICIALLY
ON THE
MARKET.



SO?



THEY TELL
ME YOU AND
SAKI-SAN
BROKE UP
AT THE
BEGINNING
OF SPRING.

THEY
REALLY
DON'T
RESPECT
MY
PRIVACY.



...WOULD
YOU MIND
GETTING
TO THE
POINT?

WOULDN'T
YOU LIKE TO
GET A FRESH
START BY
MEETING
SOMEONE
NEW?



**WON'T
YOU DATE
ME WITH
MARRIAGE
IN MIND?**

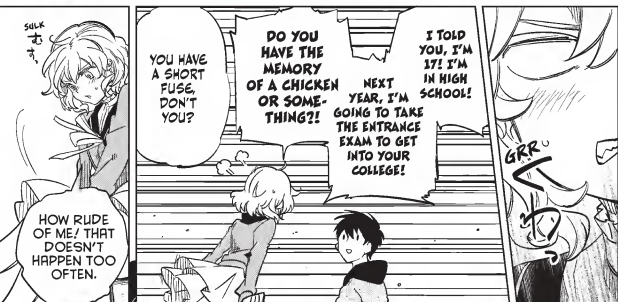
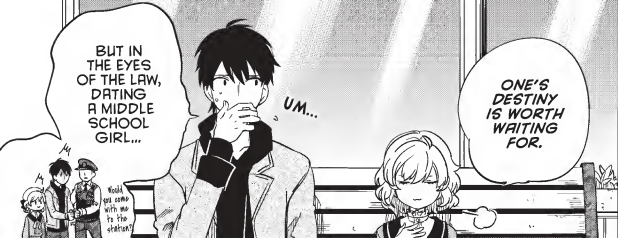


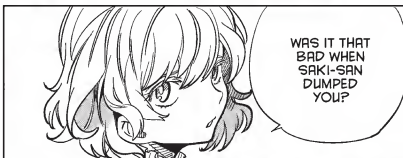
I'VE BEEN
WAITING
FOR THIS
MOMENT.

I'VE
HAD A
CRUSH ON
YOU FOR
TWO
YEARS.

YOU'RE
MORE
DIRECT
THAN YOU
SEEM.

BUT TWO
YEARS?
THAT'S VERY
PERSISTENT
OF YOU.







I'D MET
HER PARENTS,
AND WE PLANNED
TO HAVE OUR
ENGAGEMENT
CEREMONY
SOMETIME
NEXT YEAR.

AND
THEN WE
BROKE UP.
I FELT LIKE
I'D BEEN
HIT BY AN
AVALANCHE.



I KNOW WHY IT
HAPPENED, BUT
THERE'S SO MUCH
I CAN'T BELIEVE
IN ANYMORE.

THERE WAS
NOTHING
I COULD
DO.



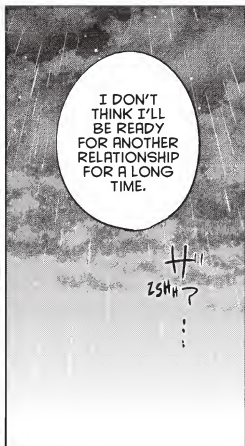
FWISH

HUH?

BE
SPECIFIC
...

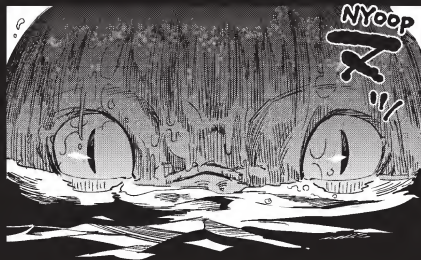


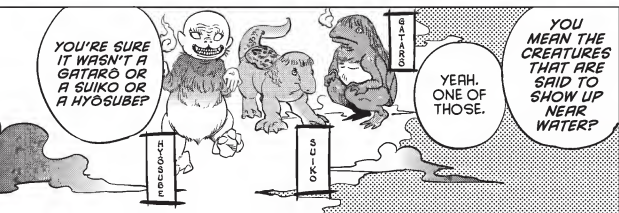
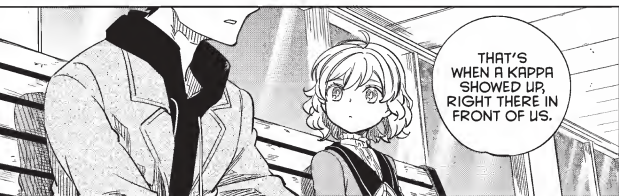
WHAT,
SPECIFICALLY,
HAPPENED TO
DRAG YOU TO
SUCH DEPTHS
OF SHAMEFUL
TRAGEDY?

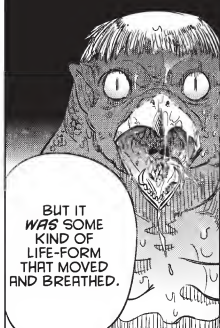


I DON'T
THINK I'LL
BE READY
FOR ANOTHER
RELATIONSHIP
FOR A LONG
TIME.

!!
ZSHH?







BUT IT *WAS* SOME KIND OF LIFE-FORM THAT MOVED AND BREATHED.

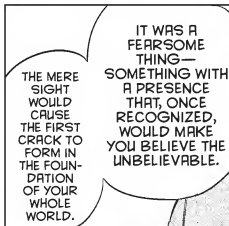


THE ONE THING I KNOW FOR SURE IS THAT IT WASN'T HUMAN, AND IT WASN'T AN ANIMAL.



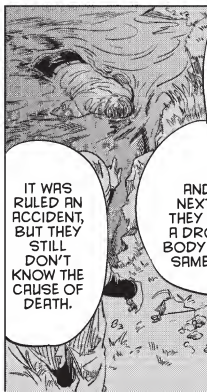
YOU KNOW A LOT ABOUT THIS STUFF. IT'S PRETTY SURPRISING.

WHATEVER IT WAS, "KAPPA" WAS A FITTING NAME FOR IT.



THE MERE SIGHT WOULD CAUSE THE FIRST CRACK TO FORM IN THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR WHOLE WORLD.

IT WAS A FEARSOME THING—SOMETHING WITH A PRESENCE THAT, ONCE RECOGNIZED, WOULD MAKE YOU BELIEVE THE UNBELIEVABLE.



IT WAS RULED AN ACCIDENT, BUT THEY STILL DON'T KNOW THE CAUSE OF DEATH.

THE ONE *WE* MET SMELLED LIKE MUD, AND LOOKED LIKE IT WAS ABOUT TO DRAG US TO THE BOTTOM OF THE RIVER AND DRAIN US OF OUR BODILY FLUIDS.

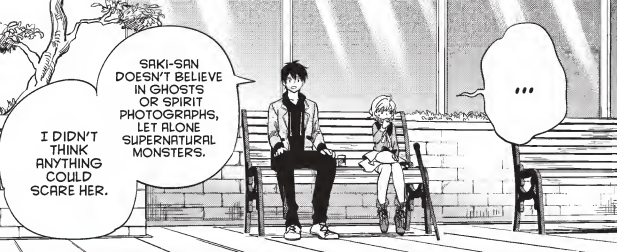
AND THE NEXT DAY, THEY FOUND A DROWNED BODY IN THAT SAME AREA.



KAPPA AREN'T BAD.



THEY'RE QUITE TRENDY THESE DAYS AND THEY CAN GIVE YOU RECOMMENDATIONS ON GOOD SUSHI OR EBISEN.



I DIDN'T
THINK
ANYTHING
COULD
SCARE HER.

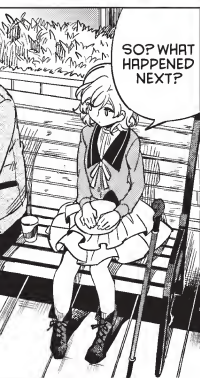
SAKI-SAN
DOESN'T BELIEVE
IN GHOSTS
OR SPIRIT
PHOTOGRAPHS,
LET ALONE
SUPERNATURAL
MONSTERS.

...



AND
SHE
CLUNG
TO ME.

BUT ONE
LOOK AT
IT, AND SHE
STARTED
SHAKING IN
FEAR,



SO? WHAT
HAPPENED
NEXT?



SPARE
ME THE
MUSHY
STUFF.
IT DOES
NOTHING TO
ENHANCE
THE
STORY.

SHE'S
NEVER
EVEN HELD
ME THAT
TIGHT IN
BED.

I MEAN,
I LOVE
THAT
SHE'S NOT
NEEDY,
THOUGH.



WITHOUT
GIVING HER
A SECOND
GLANCE,

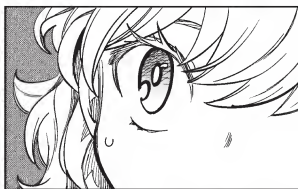
AND, IN A
VOICE THAT
SHOOK WITH
FEAR, THE
COWARD
SCREAMED
AND RAN
OFF LIKE
A SCARED
RABBIT.



LATER, SHE
TOLD ME
SHE DIDN'T
REALIZE
THAT I WAS
THAT KIND
OF MAN.

THINGS GOT
AWKWARD
AFTER THAT.
SAKI-SAN FOUND
A JOB, AND
SINCE SHE WAS
GOING TO MOVE
AWAY IN MARCH,
THE SUBJECT OF
ENDING THINGS
BETWEEN US
CAME UP.

IT'S JUST
ONE OF
THOSE
THINGS. IT
HAPPENS.

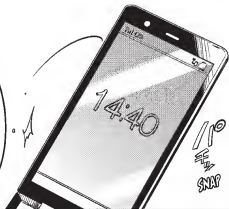


BUT THE
RUNNING
OFF PART
IS THE
FACT OF
THE
MATTER.

WELL,

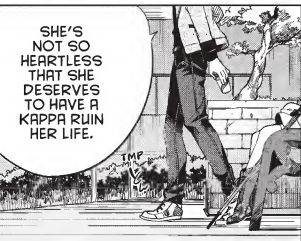
IT *WAS* A
KAPPA.

I HOPE THIS
DOESN'T SCAR
HER FOR LIFE. I
DON'T WANT HER
WONDERING IF IT
WAS A KAPPA
EVERY TIME A
DEAD BODY
WASHES UP.



SAKI-SAN'S
PROBABLY
TRAINING AT
THE POLICE
ACADEMY
ABOUT NOW.

SHE'S
NOT SO
HEARTLESS
THAT SHE
DESERVES
TO HAVE A
KAPPA RUIN
HER LIFE.



WHO CARES
WHAT HAPPENS
TO THAT HEART-
LESS WOMAN?



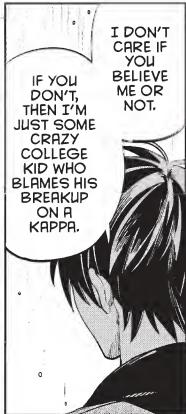
OR MAYBE A
COLLEGE KID
WHO LOST HIS
MIND FROM
THE SHOCK OF
THE BREAKUP.

EITHER WAY,
I DOUBT
I'M WORTHY
TO BE YOUR
BOYFRIEND.



I DON'T
CARE IF
YOU
BELIEVE
ME OR
NOT.

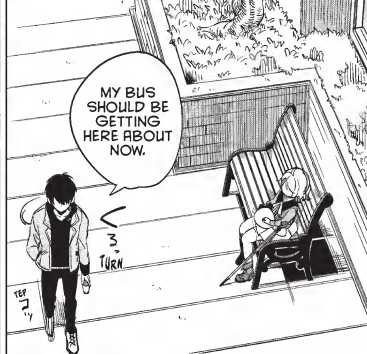
IF YOU
DON'T,
THEN I'M
JUST SOME
CRAZY
COLLEGE
KID WHO
BLAMES HIS
BREAKUP
ON A
KAPPA.





BUT WE
HAVEN'T
FINISHED
TALKING
YET.

I'M
TAKING
THE BUS,
TOO. IT'S
PROBABLY
THE SAME
ONE, BASED
ON THE
TIME.



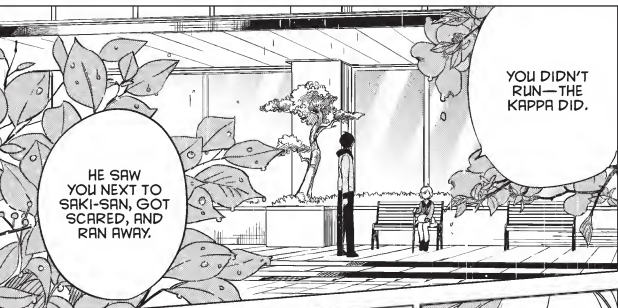
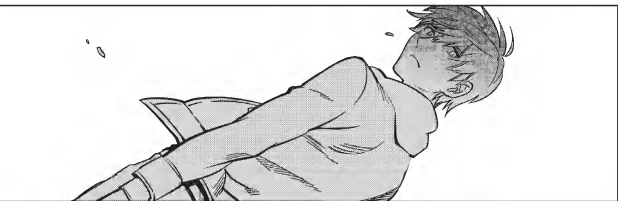
MY BUS
SHOULD BE
GETTING
HERE ABOUT
NOW.

TURN

TEP
24

WHICH
ONE
OF YOU
WAS THE
COWARD
THAT RAN
AND LEFT
SAKI-SAN
BEHIND?

YOU
WEREN'T
VERY CLEAR
ABOUT THE
SUBJECT
OF YOUR
SENTENCES.



HE SAW
YOU NEXT TO
SAKI-SAN, GOT
SCARED, AND
RAN AWAY.

YOU DIDN'T
RUN—THE
KAPPA DID.



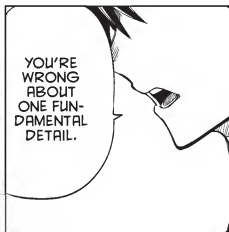
I FEEL
SORRY
FOR HIM.



RUNNING
INTO *YOU*
IN THE
MIDDLE OF
THE NIGHT.

FROM
HIS
POINT OF
VIEW,
HE'S A
VERY
UNLUCKY
KAPPA.

THEY'RE
INTELLIGENT
CREATURES,
SO HE WOULD
HAVE KNOWN
EXACTLY
WHAT HE WAS
AFRAID OF.





I WAS LYING.

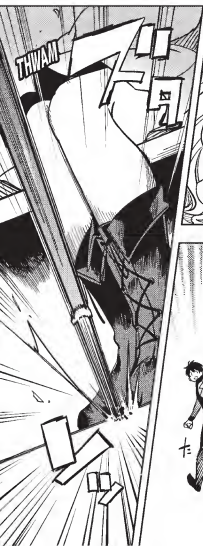
I WOULDN'T
TELL SOME
RANDOM
LITTLE GIRL
THE TRUE
STORY OF
MY HEART-
BREAK.

BUT YOU
JUST SAID
YOU SAW
ONE.



ISN'T
THERE?

OF
COURSE
NOT.



THWAM



SORRY.

THEY
ALREADY
SEE ME
ONCE A
MONTH.

IF YOU
STILL THINK
THEY EXIST,
THERE'S THE
PSYCHIATRIC
WARD. GO GET
YOUR HEAD
EXAMINED.

FIP



TAKE
CARE OF
YOUR-
SELF.

すた
SCAMPER



OH.

THEN I
RECOMMEND
THEY KEEP
SEEING YOU.



I'VE
ONLY EVER
HAD ONE
INTERVIEW
WITH A
KAPPA.

BUT I
AM WELL
ACQUAINTED
WITH MANY
OF THEIR
KIND.



THIS
CONVERSA-
TION ISN'T
OVER.



BUT
THEY'RE IN
THE SHADOWS
OF THE AZALEAS,
IN THE TOPS OF
THE FLOWERING
DOGWOOD
TREES...

THEY MAY
NOT BE AS
FAMOUS AS
KAPPA,

...WATCHING
US IN
SECRET.



THEY'RE
ALL OVER
THIS TOWN.
EVEN THIS
HOSPITAL...

...HAS
YŌKAI,
MONSTERS,
SPECTRES,
DEMONS...



...LURKING
IN ITS
HALLS.



WHO
ARE
YOU?

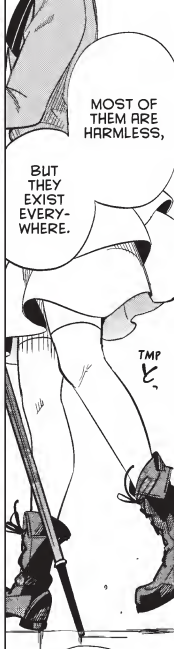
HOW CAN
YOU BE SO
SURE THESE
THINGS
EXIST?



"THAT—
THAT
THING..."

...IS
TERRIFY-
ING."

"THAT
THING IS
DIFFER-
ENT."



MOST OF
THEM ARE
HARMLESS,

BUT
THEY
EXIST
EVERY-
WHERE.

TMP
と、

AND WHEN
THEY SEE YOU,
THEY WHISPER
TO ME.



THEY TOOK
ME DEEP INTO
THE MOUNTAINS
AND THEY
ASKED ME...



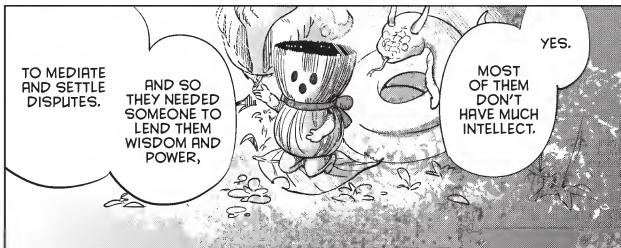
"PLEASE,
BE OUR GOD
OF WISDOM."



GOD OF
WISDOM?



THEY
KIDNAPPED
ME FOR
ABOUT TWO
WEEKS WHEN
I WAS 11.



TO MEDIATE
AND SETTLE
DISPUTES.

AND SO
THEY NEEDED
SOMEONE TO
LEND THEM
WISDOM AND
POWER,

YES.

MOST
OF THEM
DON'T
HAVE MUCH
INTELLECT.



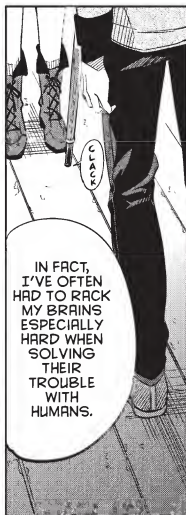
"YES, I
WILL,"

I
SAID.

MY 11-
YEAR-
OLD SELF
ANSWERED
THEM.



IN
EXCHANGE,
THEY HELP
ME, TOO.

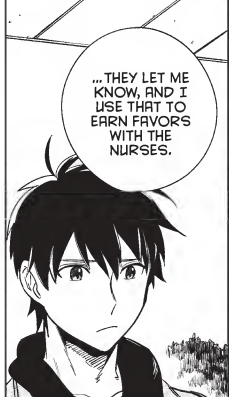


IN FACT,
I'VE OFTEN
HAD TO RACK
MY BRAINS
ESPECIALLY
HARD WHEN
SOLVING
THEIR
TROUBLE
WITH
HUMANS.

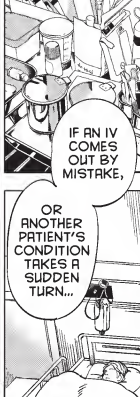


SINCE THEN,
WHenever A
DISPUTE OR
A PROBLEM
WOULD ARISE
AMONG
THEM,

THEY WOULD
COME FROM
ALL OVER THE
COUNTRY TO
CONSULT WITH ME,
LOOKING FOR
MEDIATION OR
SOLUTIONS.



...THEY LET ME
KNOW, AND I
USE THAT TO
EARN FAVORS
WITH THE
NURSES.



IF AN IV
COMES
OUT BY
MISTAKE,

OR
ANOTHER
PATIENT'S
CONDITION
TAKES A
SUDDEN
TURN...



IF I FALL
ASLEEP,
THEY WAKE
ME UP IN
TIME FOR MY
CHECKUP.

IF SOME-
THING GETS
LOST IN THE
HOSPITAL,
THEY'LL TELL
ME WHERE
IT IS.



SO YOU
CAN LOOK
IT UP IN THE
NEWSPAPERS.
JULY, SIX
YEARS AGO.



A FIFTH-
GRADE
GIRL NAMED
KOTOKO
IWANAGA
WENT
MISSING
FROM THIS
CITY.

ONE WEEK
LATER, THE
POLICE WENT
PUBLIC WITH
THE INVESTI-
GATION.

THEY EVEN
RELEASED
A PICTURE
OF ME.

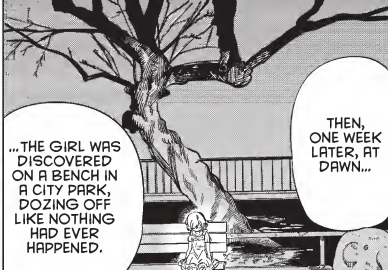
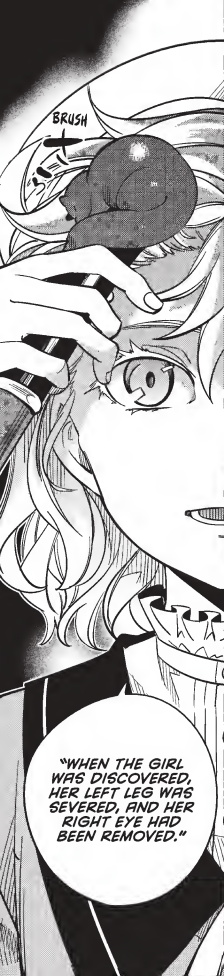


INDEED.

KINDA
HARD TO
BELIEVE...

SHAKE
3 3

3 3
SHAKE



...THE GIRL WAS DISCOVERED ON A BENCH IN A CITY PARK, DOZING OFF LIKE NOTHING HAD EVER HAPPENED.

THEN, ONE WEEK LATER, AT DAWN...



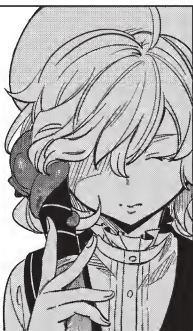
THE DETAILS WERE WITHHELD OUT OF CONSIDERATION FOR HER PRIVACY.

AND IT WASN'T FRONT-PAGE NEWS, BUT YOU'LL SURELY FIND IT IN SOME OF THE LOCAL PAPERS, WHERE THEY WROTE THE FOLLOWING...

"WHEN THE GIRL WAS DISCOVERED, HER LEFT LEG WAS SEVERED, AND HER RIGHT EYE HAD BEEN REMOVED."

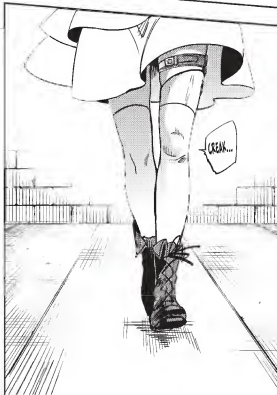
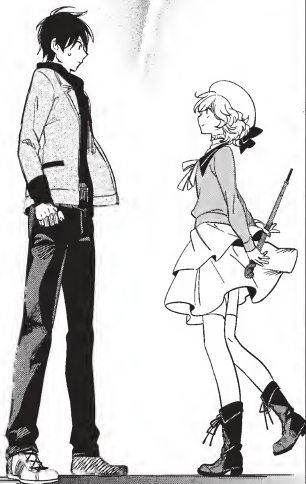


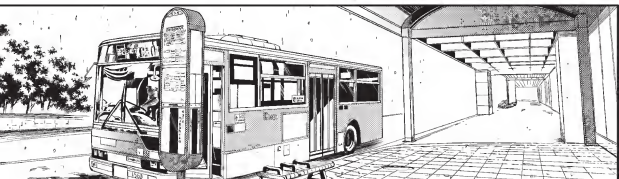
GNN

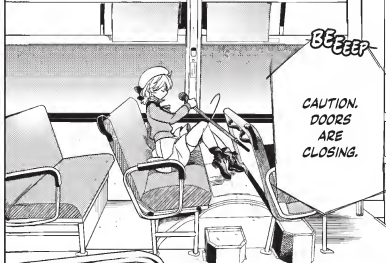
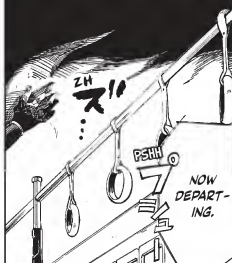


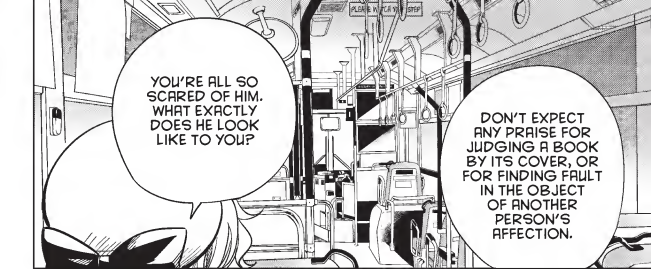
OF
COURSE, THE
PERPETRATOR
WAS NEVER
CAUGHT.

SINCE
THEN, I
HAVE BEEN
THEIR GOD
OF WISDOM.









YOU'RE ALL SO
SCARED OF HIM.
WHAT EXACTLY
DOES HE LOOK
LIKE TO YOU?

DON'T EXPECT
ANY PRAISE FOR
JUDGING A BOOK
BY ITS COVER, OR
FOR FINDING FAULT
IN THE OBJECT
OF ANOTHER
PERSON'S
AFFECTION.



...BUT TO ME,
KURŌ-SAN
FALLS INTO THE
CATEGORY OF
"HOTTIE."



Totally
bad
now!

DANGLE
DANGLE

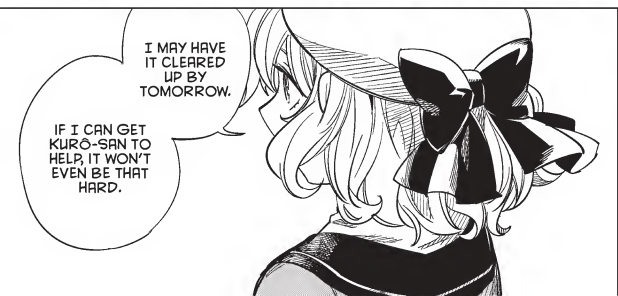
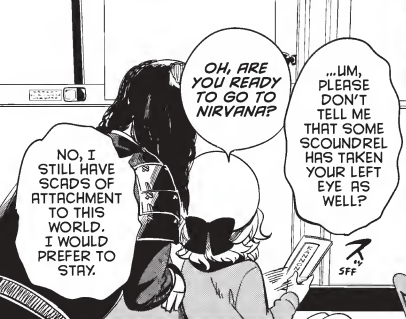
SOMETHING
DREADFUL!
TERRIBLE!
...FOUL-
SMELLING!

THAT'S
NOT VERY
SPECIFIC,
IS IT?

REEKING
OF
BLOOD!



HE MAY
NOT FIT THE
DEFINITION IN
ANY OF YOUR
EYES...





AT THE VERY
LEAST, I'VE
PIQUED HIS
INTEREST.

WHETHER
HE BELIEVES
ME OR NOT,
HE KNOWS
BETTER THAN
ANYONE THAT
I'M NOT
NORMAL.



BUT HE
DIDN'T
SEEM TO
BELIEVE
YOUR
STORY, MY
LADY.

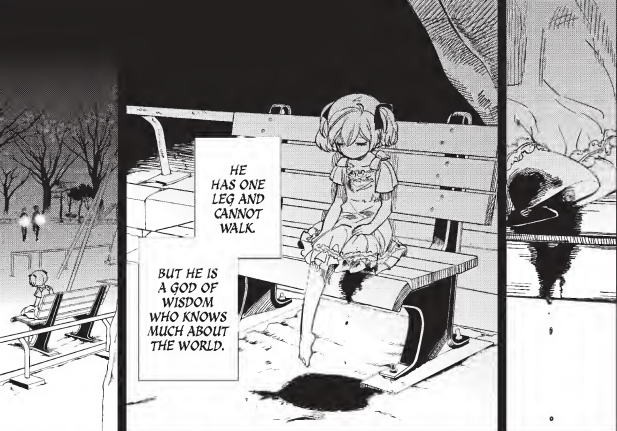
THAT
THING?



NOW
IT'S UP
TO HIM.

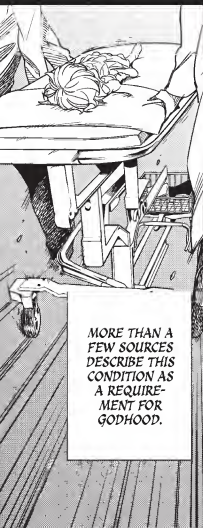
THE KOJIKI,
WHICH IS SAID
TO BE JAPAN'S
OLDEST
PIECE OF
LITERATURE,
MAKES MENTION
OF A GOD BY
THE NAME OF
KUEBIKO.





HE
HAS ONE
LEG AND
CANNOT
WALK.

BUT HE IS
A GOD OF
WISDOM
WHO KNOWS
MUCH ABOUT
THE WORLD.



AND THOSE
WHO HAVE
ONLY ONE
EYE HAVE
SOMETIMES
BEEN TREATED
AS GODS OR
SOMETHING
VERY NEAR.

BECAUSE HE
ONLY HAS
ONE LEG, HE
HAS BEEN
ASSOCIATED
WITH
SCARECROWS.



THERE ARE MANY
INSTANCES WHERE,
AS AN OFFERING TO
THE GODS, A PERSON
WAS CONSECRATED
BY HAVING ONE
OF THEIR EYES
DAMAGED, SETTING
THEM UP AS A
LINK BETWEEN
GODS AND MEN.

AND
THROUGHOUT
THE WORLD,
GODS OF
THE FORGE
HAVE BEEN
DESCRIBED AS
HAVING ONE
EYE OR ONE
LEG.

MORE THAN A
FEW SOURCES
DESCRIBE THIS
CONDITION AS
A REQUIRE-
MENT FOR
GODHOOD.



SURGERY IN PROGRESS

IT'S NOT A
CLEAN CUT,

BUT IT'S
LIKE IT'S BEEN
CAUTERIZED
WITH SOME
SORT OF
ACID.

WHAT'S
THIS
SCAR?

MANY
TRADITIONS
HAVE GODS
WITH ONLY
ONE EYE OR
ONE LEG.

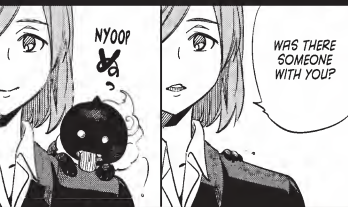
GNN
!!

HER RIGHT
EYE HAS BEEN
TAKEN OUT,
TOO.

BUT
THERE'S
NO PUS OR
SWELLING.
IT'S ALMOST
COMPLETELY
HEALED.

THERE'S NO
NEED TO OPEN
IT UP AND
RE-TREAT IT.

TMP
TMP





I DON'T
REALLY
REMEMBER.

YEAH.



WE'LL ALSO
CHECK ON YOUR
PROSTHETICS,
AND WE WANT
YOU TO GO TO
COUNSELING
IN CASE YOU
REMEMBER
SOMETHING.

FROM NOW ON,
WE WANT YOU TO
COME ONCE A WEEK
SO WE CAN EXAMINE
YOUR EYE AND
YOUR LEG.



CONGRATULA-
TIONS. THIS IS
YOUR LAST DAY
OF PHYSICAL
THERAPY.

TUG



YOUR PARENTS ARE
WORRIED ABOUT
YOU. THEY SAY
WHEN IT'S RAINING,
YOU'LL FALL ASLEEP
ANYWHERE.



AND DON'T
GO SLEEPING IN
WEIRD PLACES
AGAIN, OKAY?



WELL,
SEE YOU
NEXT TIME.
IT'S RAINING,
SO WATCH
YOUR STEP.

OH.



Hee
hee.

THAT'S
NOT VERY
CONVINC-
ING.

BUT IT'S
VERY YOU,
IWANAGA-
SAN.



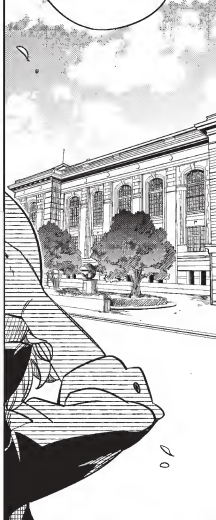
WELL, THEY DO
SAY A CHILD
WELL-SLEPT
IS A CHILD
WELL-KEPT.

AND DON'T
THEY ALSO
SAY GOOD
THINGS COME
TO THOSE WHO
SLEEP?

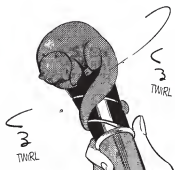




LOOKS
LIKE THINGS
ARE GOING
JUST AS I
PREDICTED.



IN ADDITION,
THE CASE WAS
UNSOLVED.
PUT IT ALL
TOGETHER, AND
THAT MEANS YOU
WON'T GET A
LOT OF HITS.

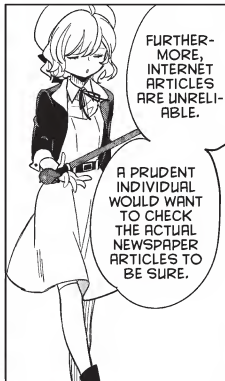


BUT THE
INCIDENT WAS
SIX YEARS AGO,
THE VICTIM WAS
A MINOR, AND
SHE DIDN'T DIE.



ONE THING
THE INTERNET
WILL TELL
YOU IS THE
DATE OF THE
INCIDENT,

SO FINDING
THE PRINTED
ARTICLES AT
THE LIBRARY
WOULDN'T TAKE
THAT MUCH
EFFORT.



FURTHER-
MORE,
INTERNET
ARTICLES
ARE UNRELI-
ABLE.

A PRUDENT
INDIVIDUAL
WOULD WANT
TO CHECK
THE ACTUAL
NEWSPAPER
ARTICLES TO
BE SURE.

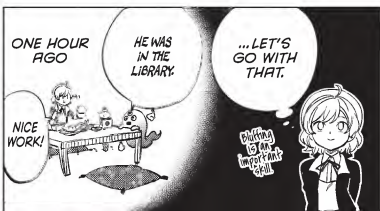


WELL
?

WHAT DID
YOU FIND?



AND, AFTER
ESTIMATING THE
TIME YOU WOULD NEED
TO FINISH YOUR RE-
SEARCH AND LEAVE THE
BUILDING, I GATHERED
THAT YOU WOULD BE
COMING OUT RIGHT
ABOUT NOW.

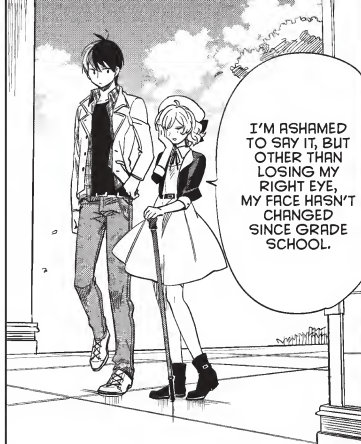


ONE HOUR
AGO

HE WAS
IN THE
LIBRARY.

...LET'S
GO WITH
THAT.

Building is an
important
skill



I'M ASHAMED
TO SAY IT, BUT
OTHER THAN
LOSING MY
RIGHT EYE,
MY FACE HASN'T
CHANGED
SINCE GRADE
SCHOOL.



IT'S A
FACT THAT A
GIRL NAMED
KOTOKO
IWANAGA
SUFFERED
A HORRIFIC
INCIDENT SIX
YEARS AGO.

AND THE
PICTURE THEY
RELEASED TO
THE PUBLIC
LOOKED JUST
LIKE YOU.



IT DOESN'T
PROVE THAT
YOU'VE BECOME
A GOD TO EVERY
MONSTER OR
YŌKAI.

BUT
THAT'S
ALL.

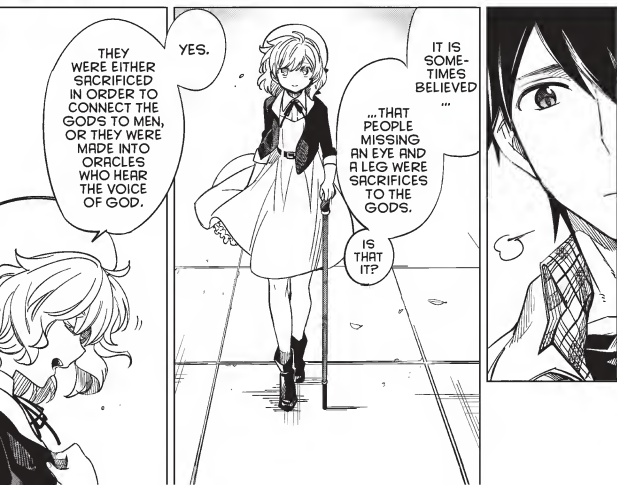


BUT IF IT
IS A DELUSION,
THEN I'M JUST A
GIRL WHO WAS
KIDNAPPED BY
SOME DEVIANT,

AND LOST
HER MIND
FROM THE
SHOCK OF
HIS ABUSE.

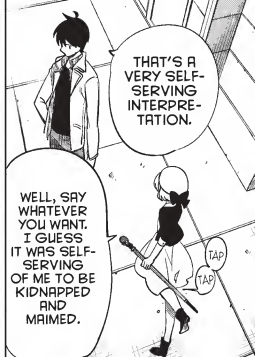
NO, IT
DOESN'T.

I MAY
HAVE
IMAGINED
THE WHOLE
THING.





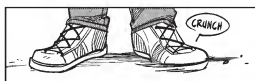
HAVE YOU
HAD LUNCH
YET? IF
NOT, I'LL
TREAT YOU.



THAT'S A
VERY SELF-
SERVING
INTERPRE-
TATION.

WELL, SAY
WHATEVER
YOU WANT.
I GUESS
IT WAS SELF-
SERVING
OF ME TO BE
KIDNAPPED
AND
MAIMED.

TAP
TAP



CRUNCH



LET'S JUST SAY
IF I GO MISSING,
THE FIRST THING
PEOPLE THINK IS
KIDNAPPING—
THAT'S THE KIND
OF MANSION I
GREW UP IN.

IF YOU
MARRY ME,
THE LAND
AND THE
HOUSE COME
WITH ME.



THE WAY YOU
TALK, I CAN'T
TELL IF YOU
WERE RAISED
IN POLITE
SOCIETY
OR NOT.

I'VE JUST
GORGED
MYSELF ON A
DELIGHTFUL
TEA LUNCH
OF KYOTO
HEIRLOOM
VEGETABLES.

MM-
HMM



WHAT KIND
OF A NAÏVE
ROMANTIC
ARE YOU?

NO, I
DON'T
WANT
TO DATE
YOU FOR
PROFIT.

I CAN
GET YOU
A JOB,
TOO.

ゴゴゴ
RUMBLE

ゴゴゴ
RUMBLE

THEN YOU
ADMIT
I'M YOUR
TYPE?

SKFF
7-A

ARE YOU
SURE YOU
SHOULD
BE SAYING
THIS?

SHOULDN'T
YOU AT
LEAST GET
SOMETHING
OUT OF IT?

SKFF
+ +

SKFF
+ +

NO.

SKFF

7-A

SKFF

7-A

BUT
...

A
LIBRARI-
AN'S COMING.

WHAT'S
THE
MATTER?

OH,
UH.

POOF

MY
LADY!

THERE
YOU GO
AGAIN...
OH! WAIT,
KURŌ-
SA—

BOFF



WELL,
HELLO,
BAKÉ-
DANUKI.

THE
PROTECTIVE
BARRIER
AROUND THE
LIBRARY
HAS BEEN
BROKEN!

THERE'S
GOING TO
BE CHAOS.
HELP US,
PLEA...



KURŌ-SAN,
YOU CAN'T
SCARE
THEM LIKE
THAT.

I
DIDN'T DO
ANYTHING.

MY LADY!
WHY?! I TOLD
YOU TIME AND
AGAIN TO GIVE
UP ON THAT
THING!



YEEEEK?!



I'LL SHOW
YOU A REAL
FIGHT AND
ERASE ALL
YOUR
DOUBTS.

HUH?

COME
ON,
KURŌ-
SAN.

ANYWAY,
IF THE
BARRIER'S
DOWN, THAT
MEANS
TROUBLE.
WE'D BETTER
HURRY.



OH,
NOW,
DON'T
BE LIKE
THAT.

AND I
WAS ON MY
WAY TO GET
LUNCH.

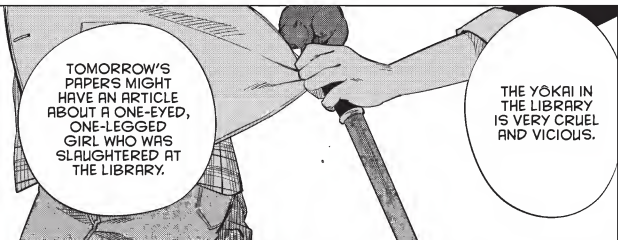
GOOD-
BYE.



THAT'S
OKAY.

ALL MY
DOUBTS WERE
GONE THE
SECOND I SAW
A GUY CHANGE
INTO A TANUKI
AND ASK YOU
FOR HELP.

I BELIEVE
YOU.



TOMORROW'S
PAPER'S MIGHT
HAVE AN ARTICLE
ABOUT A ONE-EYED,
ONE-LEGGED
GIRL WHO WAS
SLAUGHTERED AT
THE LIBRARY.

THE YŌKAI IN
THE LIBRARY
IS VERY CRUEL
AND VICIOUS.



WOULD
YOU EVER
BE ABLE TO
ESCAPE THE
GUILT?

AND
SHOULD
THAT
HAPPEN,
YOU MAY
BE THE
ONLY ONE
WHO KNOWS
OF THE REAL
KILLER...

A GIRL WHO
CONFESSED
HER LOVE
TO YOU—
ALTHOUGH SHE
MAY NOT BE
YOUR TYPE—
COULD MEET
HER TRAGIC
END.

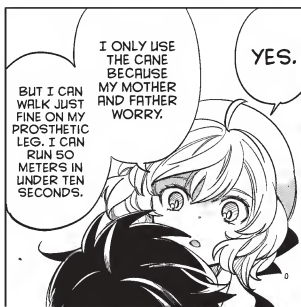


I DON'T
KNOW
WHAT'S
"CONVEN-
TIONAL"
AT TIMES
LIKE THIS!

THANKS
SO MUCH
FOR YOUR
HELP.

BUT I'M
NOT QUITE
SATISFIED
WITH THIS
MANNER OF
CARRIAGE.

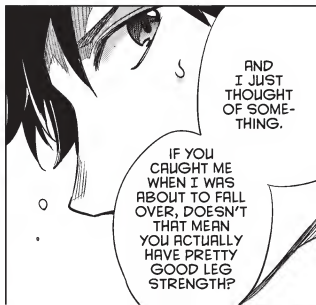
AT A TIME
LIKE THIS,
WOULDN'T
IT BE MORE
CONVEN-
TIONAL TO
CRADLE ME
IN YOUR
ARMS?



I ONLY USE
THE CANE
BECAUSE
MY MOTHER
AND FATHER
WORRY.

YES.

BUT I CAN
WALK JUST
FINE ON MY
PROSTHETIC
LEG. I CAN
RUN 50
METERS IN
UNDER TEN
SECONDS.



AND
I JUST
THOUGHT
OF SOME-
THING.

IF YOU
CAUGHT ME
WHEN I WAS
ABOUT TO FALL
OVER, DOESN'T
THAT MEAN
YOU ACTUALLY
HAVE PRETTY
GOOD LEG
STRENGTH?



I DON'T
BUY IT.

YOUR LONG-
LEGGED
SPRINT IS
ENORMOUSLY
HELPFUL.

BUT I HAVE
TO BE CAREFUL
WHEN CLIMBING
STAIRS—THEY'RE
HARD ON MY
PROSTHESIS.

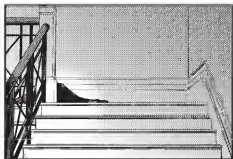
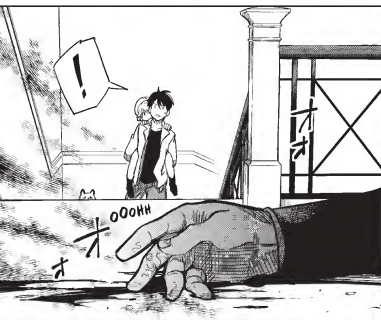


I WAS
MERELY
HOPING YOU
WOULD HELP
ME IF YOU
COULD.

THAT'S
PRACTI-
CALLY THE
SAME
THING.

I
WOULDN'T
DREAM
OF IT.

ARE YOU
SURE YOU'RE
NOT JUST
TAKING
ADVANTAGE
OF ME?





MY
LADY-
YYYY!

BAM



HEY!

ARE
YOU
OK...?

TEP



WHACK

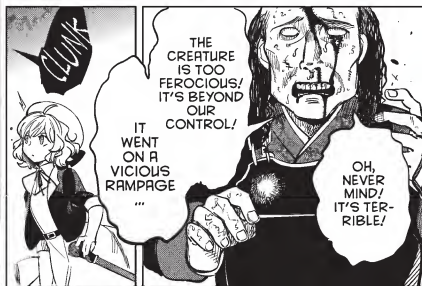
AND
IN THE
END, THE
VILLAIN ATE
THROUGH
THE
BARRIER!



YIPE! YOU
REALLY
BROUGHT
HIM WITH
YOU?!

THAT'S
THE GHOST
OF A
FALLEN
WARRIOR.

CALM
DOWN,
KURÔ-
SAN.



CLUNK

THE
CREATURE
IS TOO
FEROCIOUS!
IT'S BEYOND
OUR
CONTROL!

IT
WENT
ON A
VICIOUS
RAMPAGE
...

OH,
NEVER
MIND!
IT'S TER-
RIBLE!



IN THE
WORLDS
OF MAN
AND SPIRIT,
ORDER
MUST BE
MAINTAINED.

I CANNOT
ALLOW
ANYONE TO
DISREGARD
THE LAWS
OF REA...

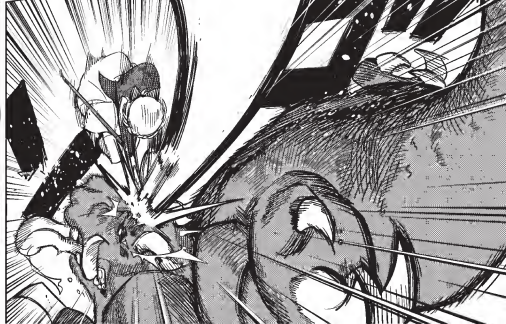
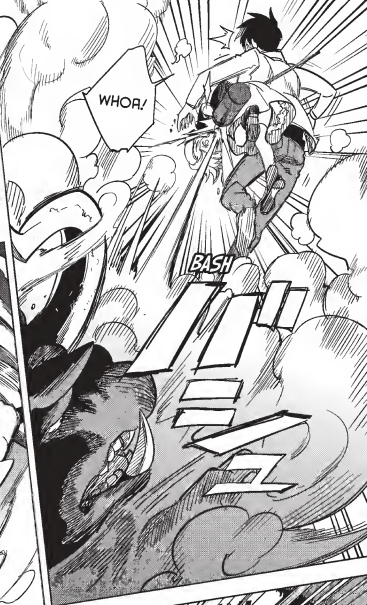
... SON...

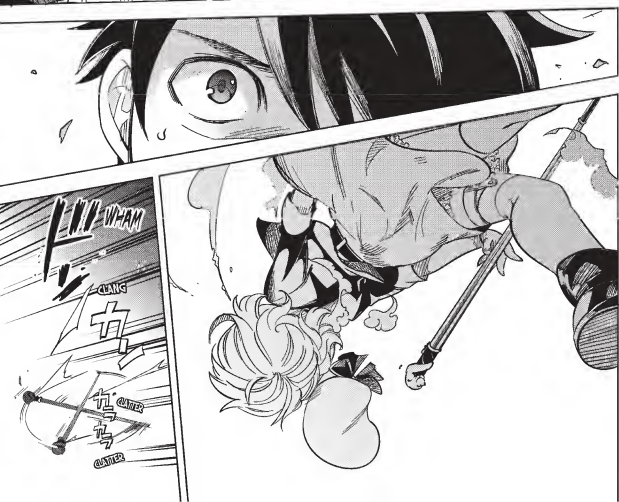
THICK

LUNGE

CLAMP







.....
Siiiiigh

IS THIS
REALLY
THE
TIME?

IT HAS
A HIGHER
DEGREE OF
PHYSICAL
CONTACT.

YES.

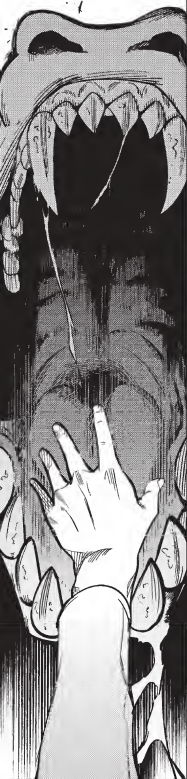
I KNEW
THIS WOULD
BE A BETTER
WAY TO
CARRY ME.

WE'VE
MADE IT
EXCESSIVELY
ANGRY.

PEH!!

CRASH!!

GOOD
POINT. THIS
IS NOT
IDEAL.



WE'LL
BEAT A
TACTICAL
RE...TREAT
...?

PLEASE
PUT ME
DOWN.



M
M
R
O
O
O
O!



I'M
TRYING
TO STOP
YOU FROM
GETTING
US BOTH
KILLED.

NO.

SQUEEZE
チサ
チサ

YOU'LL
HAVE
AMPLE
OPPOR-
TUNITY TO
DO DIRTY
THINGS
TO ME
LATER.

KURO-
SAN?

WHAT
ARE
YOU
...?

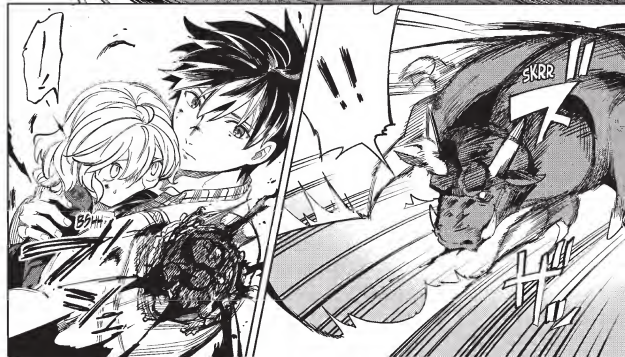


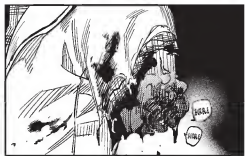
KURO-
SAN!

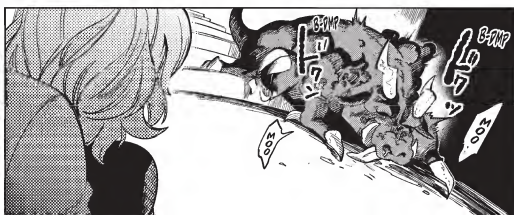
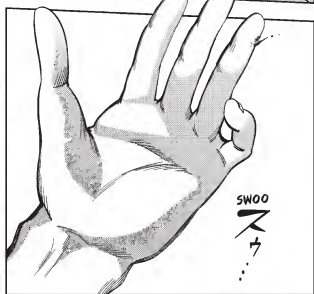
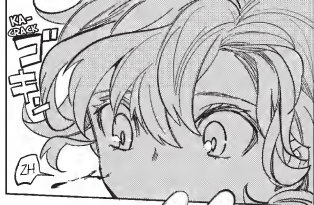
RUN—

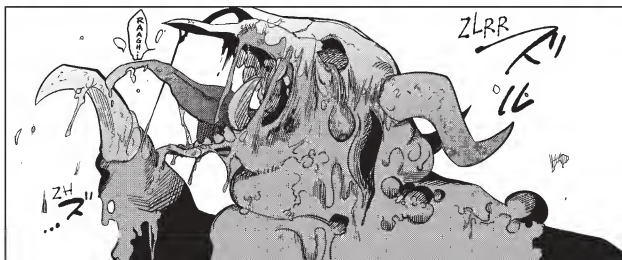
THOOM

THOOM













WHEN
I WAS 11
YEARS
OLD,

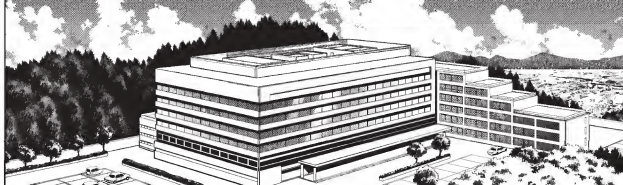
I GORGED
MYSELF
ON TWO
DIFFERENT
KINDS
OF YŌKAI
MEAT.

IN/SPECTRE





CHAPTER 2:
"RUMORS OF THE STEEL LADY"



VISITING
YOUR
COUSIN
AGAIN
TODAY?

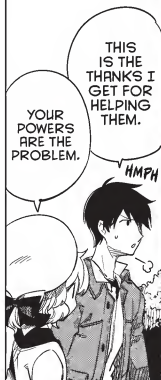
ひょろ
HOP



THOSE ARE
PRETTY.



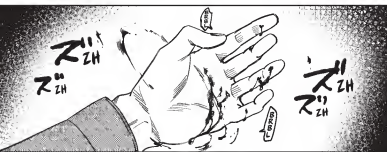




"HE'S ACTUALLY A WORLD-CLASS YŌKAI GOURMAND! HE'S GONNA COOK US UP AND ENJOY EVERY LAST BITE!"

THEY SAY.







...



THE
LEGEND OF
YAO BIKUNI
WHO LIVED
HUNDREDS
OF YEARS
AFTER EATING
MERMAID
FLESH IS
FAMOUS ALL
ACROSS
JAPAN.

...SINCE
ANCIENT
TIMES, IT HAS
BEEN BELIEVED
THAT EATING
MERMAID
FLESH WOULD
BESTOW
AGELESS
IMMORTALITY.

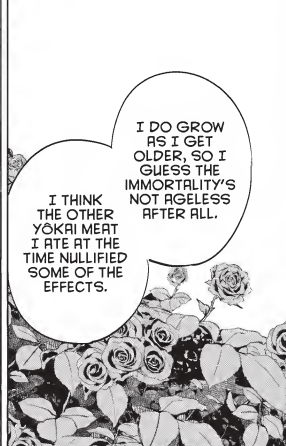


BUT AS
FAR AS
"AGELESS"
GOES,
YOU DON'T
LOOK 11.



I'VE LOST
FINGERS,
BEEN BURNED
PRETTY
BADLY,

BUT I
DON'T
HAVE A
SINGLE
SCAR.





YOU CAN STILL SAY THAT AFTER EVERYTHING I'VE TOLD YOU?

VERY WELL. I SUSPECT WE'LL BE SEEING EACH OTHER FREQUENTLY FOR A LONG TIME TO COME.

I'M SURE I'LL HAVE AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO ASK YOU ABOUT YOURSELF.



IT'S UNDERSTANDABLE. OUTWARDLY, YOU ARE THE VERY PICTURE OF NAÏVETÉ.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN AN UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT FOR SAKI-SAN AS WELL.

"I DIDN'T KNOW THAT YOU WERE THAT KIND OF MAN,"

SHE SAID.

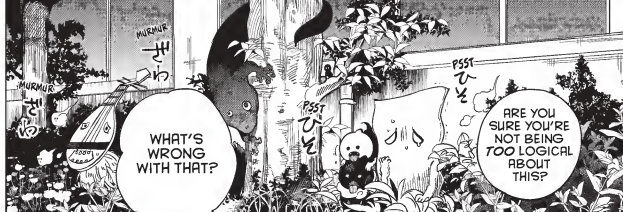


I DO FIND IT SOMEWHAT UNSETTLING.

AND I'M SURE IT'S WHY YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SAKI-SAN ENDED IN RUIN.

RUSTLE





WHAT'S
WRONG
WITH THAT?

ARE YOU
SURE YOU'RE
NOT BEING
TOO LOGICAL
ABOUT
THIS?



DOESN'T
THAT EAT
AWAY
AT HIS
HEART?

BUT HE'S
FORCED TO LIVE
IN CONSTANT
FEAR OF RUINED
RELATIONSHIPS,
AND HOLDING
ON TO A SECRET
HE CAN NEVER
REVEAL.



THE
SPECTRES
FEAR
KURŌ-SAN,
SO THEY
UNLIKE KEEP THEIR
DISTANCE.
CAN
HAVE A
NORMAL
LIFE IF HE
WANTS
TO.

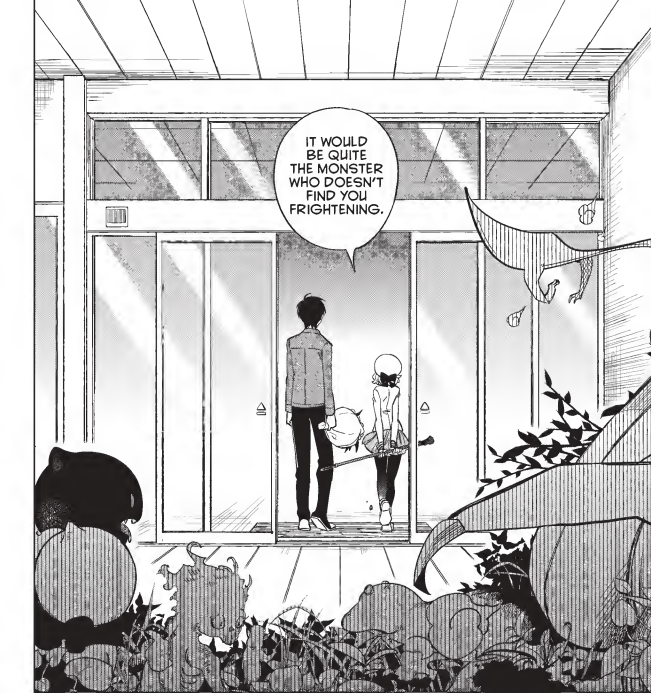


THAT'S
NOT THE
ONLY
PROBLEM,
AND YOU
KNOW IT.



IF WE
COULD JUST
IGNORE THE
FACT THAT MY
APPEARANCE
DOESN'T MATCH
WHAT APPEALS TO
YOU, THIS WOULD
ALL BE SOLVED
HANDILY.



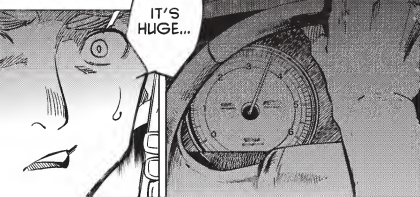
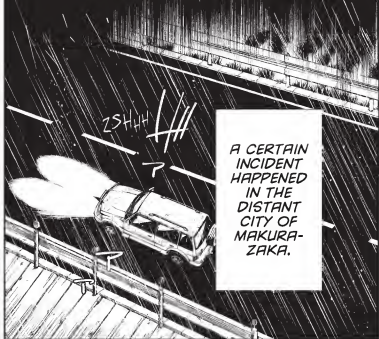


IT WOULD
BE QUITE
THE MONSTER
WHO DOESN'T
FIND YOU
FRIGHTENING.

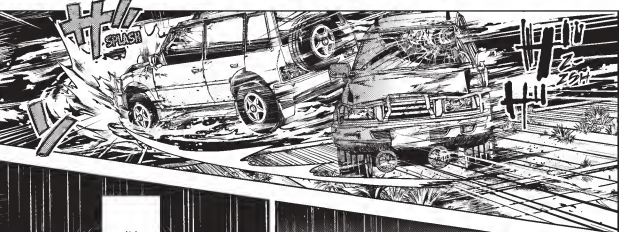
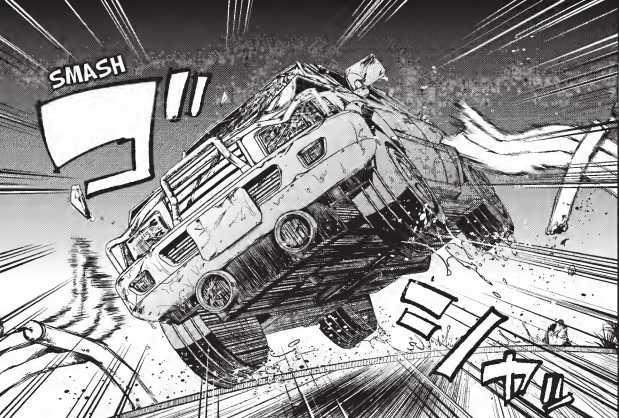


APPROXI-
MATELY
TWO AND
A HALF
YEARS
LATER.

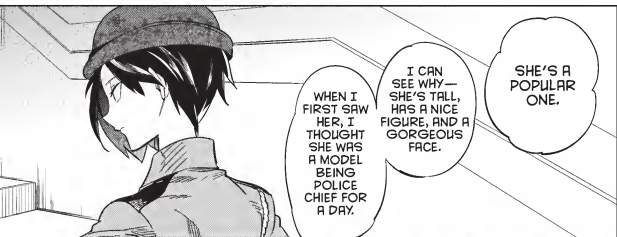
++
ZSHHH

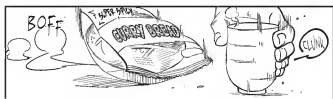


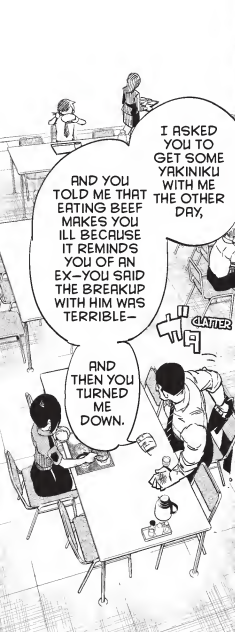












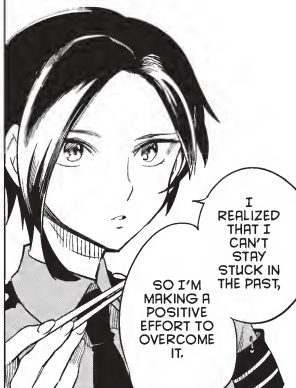
*A KOREAN DISH OF MARINATED BEEF SHORTRIB





SO CAN I
INVITE YOU
OUT FOR
YAKINIKU
AGAIN?

IF
POSSIBLE,
I WOULD
PREFER TO
KEEP THIS
TRAINING
OUT OF MY
PRIVATE
LIFE.



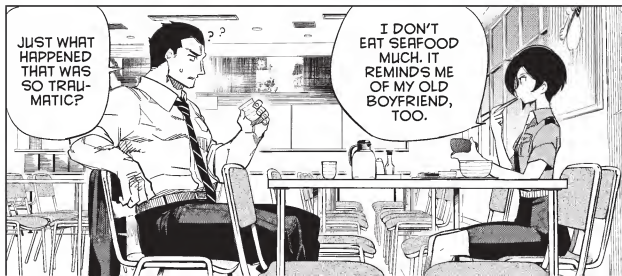
I
REALIZED
THAT I
CAN'T
STAY
STUCK IN
THE PAST,

SO I'M
MAKING A
POSITIVE
EFFORT TO
OVERCOME
IT.



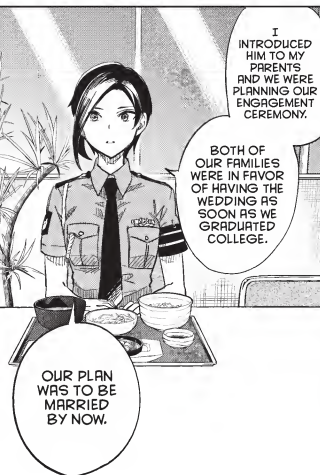
I JUST
FOUND
A GOOD
PLACE.

OKAY,
HOW
ABOUT
SUSHI?



JUST WHAT
HAPPENED
THAT WAS
SO TRAU-
MATIC?

I DON'T
EAT SEAFOOD
MUCH. IT
REMINDS ME
OF MY OLD
BOYFRIEND,
TOO.





BUT
I HAD TO
END IT.

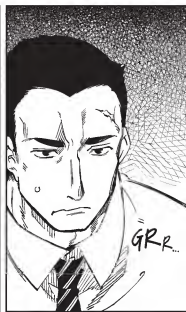
IF WE
HADN'T
BROKEN
UP, WE
WOULD
BE.



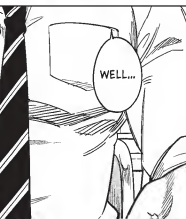
I'M
MERELY
STATING
FACTS.

WITH
KINDNESS.

YOU LOOK
ME IN THE EYE
AND TELL ME
THESE THINGS
IN ALL
SERIOUSNESS—
HOW AM I
SUPPOSED TO
REACT?



...I DIDN'T
COME HERE
TO ASK
YOU OUT.
AND I'M
NOT HERE
TO HURT
YOUR
FEELINGS.



WELL...



...THAT'S
WHAT'S
IN THE
REPORT.

THE DRIVER
"THOUGHT HE
SAW A DOG
IN FRONT OF
HIS CAR, SO HE
SWERVED, BROKE
THROUGH THE
GUARDRAIL, AND
DROVE INTO
THE RIVER."

I
WANTED
TO TALK
ABOUT
THE CAUSE.

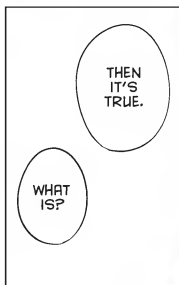


YES,
AND?

YOU
HANDLED
THE ACCIDENT
BY THE RIVER
THREE DAYS
AGO,
RIGHT?



I
UNDERSTAND
HE TOLD A
DIFFERENT
STORY AT
FIRST.



THEN
IT'S
TRUE.

WHAT
IS?



HE WAS
AGITATED.
HE HAD
JUST BEEN
RESCUED
FROM HIS
SUBMERGED
CAR.

HE
DENIED IT
LATER. HE
SAID HE
WAS MIS-
TAKEN.



... WITH A
SHORT,
FRILLY, RED
AND BLACK
DRESS...

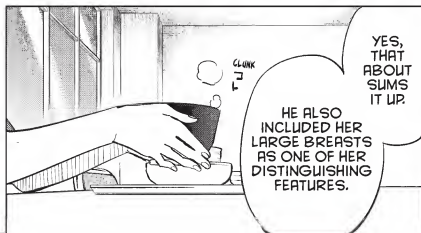
... A BIG
RIBBON
ON HER
HEAD...

THAT THE
COLLEGE
STUDENT
ORIGINALLY
DESCRIBED

... "A
WOMAN
CARRYING A
TWO-METER
STEEL
GIRDER..."



... AND NO
FACE, SUDDENLY
APPEARING IN
FRONT OF HIS
CAR, CAUSING
HIM TO PANIC
AND SWERVE
INTO
THE RIVER."



CLUNK
ク

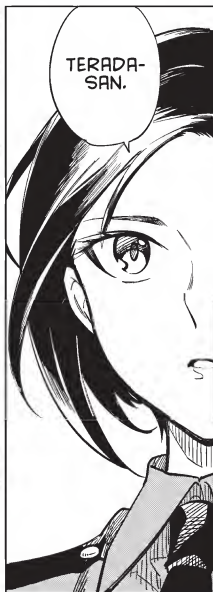
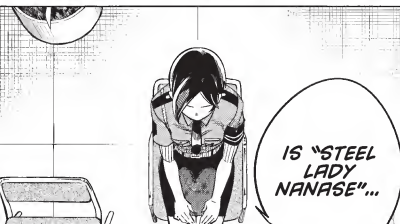
HE ALSO
INCLUDED HER
LARGE BREASTS
AS ONE OF HER
DISTINGUISHING
FEATURES.

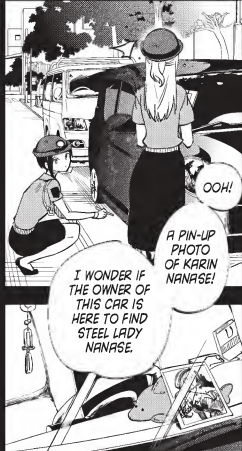
YES,
THAT
ABOUT
SUMS
IT UP.



BAM
バ
ン

IT'S
TRUE,
THAT'S
WHAT HE
SAID.







IT
WAS THAT
BIG-BUSTED
IDOL.

BUT IN
LATE JANUARY,
THEY FOUND A
BODY UNDER A
FALLEN STEEL
GIRDER AT THE
CONSTRUCTION
SITE NEAR THE
HOTEL.

SO SHE CAME
TO MAKURAZAKA
AND HOLED UP
IN A HOTEL TO
GET AWAY FROM
THEM.

I HADN'T
HEARD OF HER
UNTIL THE
ACCIDENT, BUT
APPARENTLY
SHE WAS VERY
POPULAR.

BUT...

SOME
UNSAVORY
RUMORS
HAD THE
MEDIA IN AN
UPROAR.

WELL,
NOW THEY'RE
TALKING
ABOUT HER
AGAIN.



BUT ONCE
THEY DETERMINED
IT WAS AN
ACCIDENT,
EVERYONE
STOPPED
TALKING ABOUT
HER.

OUR LITTLE
TOWN DID
ATTRACT AN
AWFUL LOT OF
REPORTERS.



NO...
THEY'VE
SEEN
HER.



SO THEY
THINK IT WAS
SUICIDE?

THE THEORY
THAT SHE
KILLED HERSELF
BECAUSE OF
ALL THE
SLANDER AND
LIBEL WAS
PRETTY
CONVINCING.



THE
FACE-
LESS
GHOST

OF KARIN
NANASE!!



SHE APPEARS
EVERY NIGHT IN
MAKURAZAKA
CITY.



SHE WEARS
A COSTUME
FROM HER
IDOL DAYS,

AND
CARRIES IN
ONE HAND
THE STEEL
BEAM THAT
CRUSHED
HER.



YUMIHARA-SAN,
I DIDN'T KNOW
YOU DON'T
LIKE GHOST
STORIES.

GASP

SNAP



MY LITTLE
SISTER SAYS
IT'S WHAT ALL
HER MIDDLE- AND
HIGH-SCHOOL
FRIENDS ARE
TALKING ABOUT.

Yeah,
right!

THEY NAMED HER
"STEEL LADY
NANASE"
AFTER THE STEEL BEAM
SHE WIELDS. SHE'S
GOING VIRAL ON THE
INTERNET TOO.

OH...



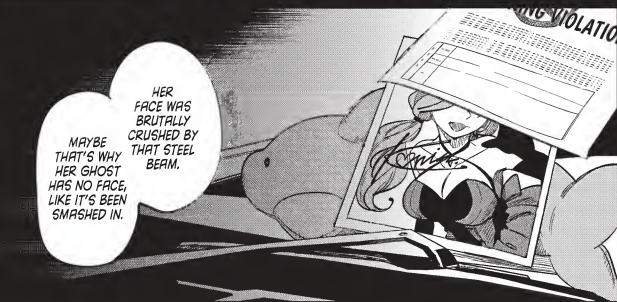
STEEL
LADY
NANASE.

IT'S A
CATCHY
NAME.

IT'S
OKAY.

OH.

I'M
SORRY!



MAYBE
THAT'S WHY
HER GHOST
HAS NO FACE,
LIKE IT'S BEEN
SMASHED IN.

HER
FACE WAS
BRUTALLY
CRUSHED BY
THAT STEEL
BEAM.



BECAUSE SHE CARRIES A STEEL BEAM THAT LOOKS TOO BIG FOR HER SLENDER, FEMININE PHYSIQUE, SHE WAS GIVEN THE NICKNAME STEEL LADY NANASE.

SHE CRAWLED OUT FROM UNDER THAT STEEL GIRDER AND WAS REBORN.



MORE OF A GHOST STORY THAN AN URBAN LEGEND.

IT MAKES FOR AN INTERESTING STORY, BUT IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A RUMOR.

MAYBE IT'S THE EVER-SO-SLIGHTLY UNNATURAL RING TO IT THAT MAKES IT STICK IN YOUR MEMORY.



IS THERE SOME GHOST OR PHANTOM NAMED STEEL LADY NANASE WANDERING OUR STREETS?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?



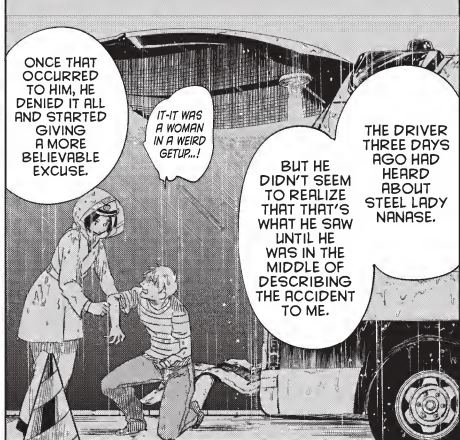
AND HE
DIDN'T
SEEM
TO BE
LYING?

ONCE THAT
OCCURRED
TO HIM, HE
DENIED IT ALL
AND STARTED
GIVING
A MORE
BELIEVABLE
EXCUSE.

IT-IT WAS
A WOMAN
IN A WEIRD
GETUP...!

BUT HE
DIDN'T SEEM
TO REALIZE
THAT THAT'S
WHAT HE SAW
UNTIL HE
WAS IN THE
MIDDLE OF
DESCRIBING
THE ACCIDENT
TO ME.

THE DRIVER
THREE DAYS
AGO HAD
HEARD
ABOUT
STEEL LADY
NANASE.



AND I
DETERMINED
THAT GHOST
STORIES DO
NOT BELONG
IN POLICE
REPORTS.

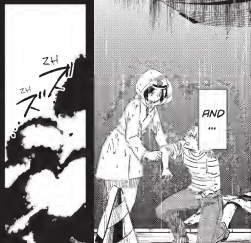
WHETHER IT
WAS A DOG
OR A GHOST
THAT JUMPED
OUT AT HIM
DOESN'T
CHANGE THE
OUTCOME,
SO I DIDN'T
PRESS FOR
DETAILS.

...WHY IS
TERADA-SAN
PRYING
INTO THIS
INCIDENT?

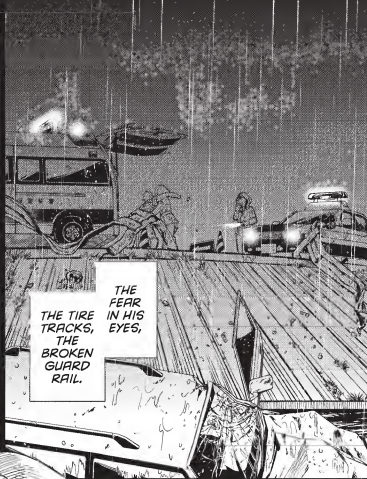


IN YOUR
OWN OPINION,
DID HE SEE
A WOMAN WITH
A STEEL BEAM?
OR DIDN'T HE?

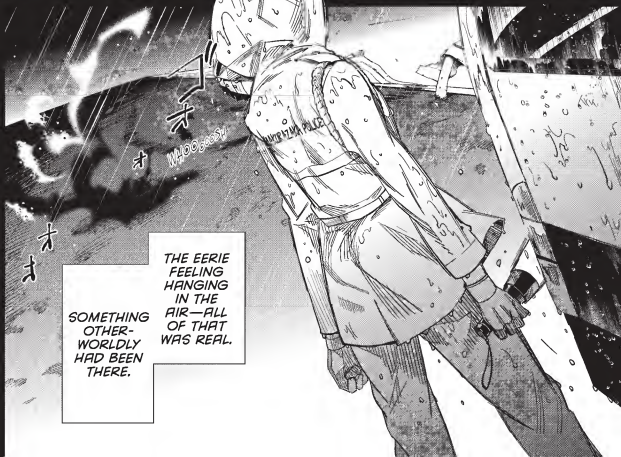
I'M NOT
TRYING TO
ACCUSE YOU
OF ANYTHING.



AND

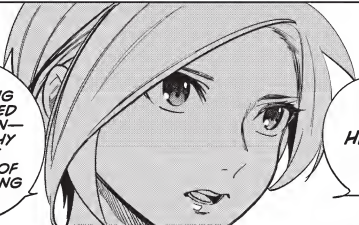


THE
FEAR
IN HIS
EYES,
THE
TIRE
TRACKS,
THE
BROKEN
GUARD
RAIL.



SOMETHING
OTHER-
WORLDLY
HAD BEEN
THERE.

THE EERIE
FEELING
HANGING
IN THE
AIR—ALL
OF THAT
WAS REAL.



HE SAW
SOMETHING
THAT DEFIED
ALL REASON—
THAT'S WHY
HE LOST
CONTROL OF
THE STEERING
WHEEL.

HE DID.



THEY
WENT
STRAIGHT TO
THE
POLICE
BOX?

...!



A FEW OFFICERS
HAVE HAD PEOPLE
COME INTO THEIR
POLICE BOXES,
SAYING THEY SAW OR
WERE ALMOST ATTACKED
BY A SUSPICIOUS PER-
SON THAT MATCHED
THE STEEL LADY'S
DESCRIPTION.



THEY
GENERALLY
WRITE IT OFF
AS A CASE OF
MISTAKEN
IDENTITY OR
FIGMENTS
OF THE
IMAGINATION.

IS STEEL
LADY
NANASE
REALLY
THAT
EXTRAOR-
DINARY?

IT'S EVEN
MORE UNUSUAL
TO HEAR IT
STRAIGHT FROM
THE VICTIM,
RATHER THAN
HEARSAY FROM
A THIRD PARTY.

Rumors
among the
traffic division
notwithstanding

STORIES
ABOUT
GHOSTS DON'T
USUALLY GET
AS FAR AS
THE POLICE
STATION.



TERADA-SAN.

CLATTER

NONE OF THEM RESULTED IN ANY SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE, SO IT'S POSSIBLE...

...OF ATTEMPTED ASSAULT AND RANDOM ATTACKERS.

BUT ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO, WE STARTED GETTING A LOT OF REPORTS...



...THEY WERE ALMOST ATTACKED BY A WOMAN WITH A STEEL BEAM, SO THEY MADE UP SOME OTHER STORY.

...THAT SOME ARE LIKE THE GUY IN YOUR ACCIDENT, AND COULDN'T ADMIT THAT...

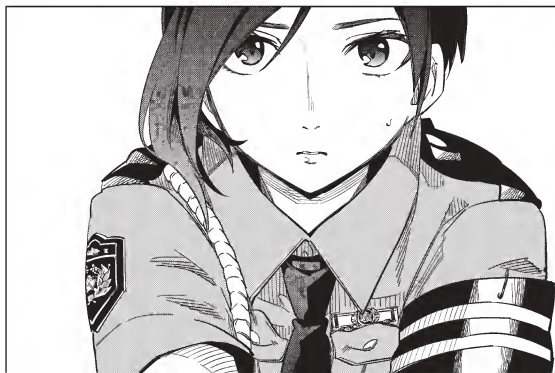


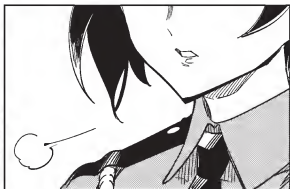
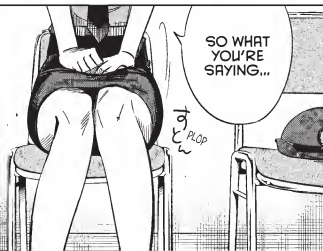
... OUT THERE ATTACKING PEOPLE?

DO YOU THINK THERE REALLY IS A STEEL LADY NANASE ...



ZOOM





THEY SAY
THE LATE
KARIN
NANASE
HAD A BUST
MEASURE-
MENT OF
OVER 100
CENTIME-
TERS*.

AND
SHE MAY BE
ENHANCING
HER BREASTS
WITH
PADDING.

...IS THAT
SOMEBODY
SOMEWHERE
IS WANDERING
AROUND TOWN,
BRANDISHING
A STEEL
GIRDER AND
PRETENDING
TO BE A
DECEASED
POP STAR?

*ABOUT 39IN.

YEAH. NOT
MY TYPE,
THOUGH.

THAT
IS BIG.

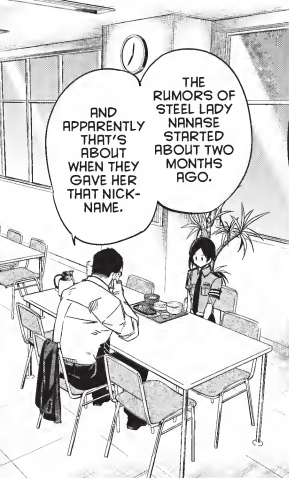
ARE YOU
TRYING TO
INSINUATE
THAT MY
BREASTS ARE
SMALL?

NO!

... THAT'S
WHAT
GETS ME.

IT'S A BIT
ELABORATE
FOR A
PRANK OR
A PLEASURE
CRIME.

TO DRESS
UP LIKE
THAT AND
SHOW UP
IN RANDOM
PLACES...



AND APPARENTLY THAT'S ABOUT WHEN THEY GAVE HER THAT NICK-NAME.

THE RUMORS OF STEEL LADY NANASE STARTED ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO.

SOME-THING THAT'S MORE THAN JUST A PRANK.

IT WOULD HAVE TO BE FOR A PRETTY BIG REASON, WITH A PRETTY BIG GOAL BEHIND IT.

IF SOMEONE WERE TO GO TO THAT KIND OF TROUBLE,

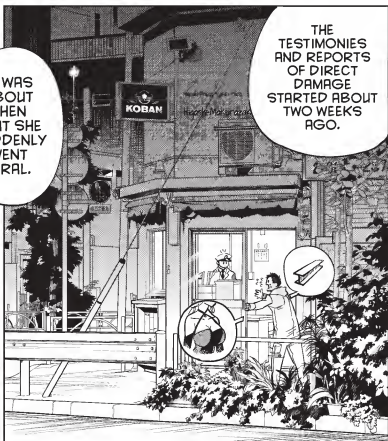
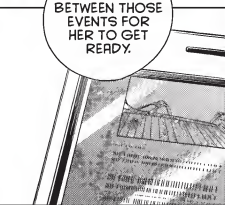


GASP

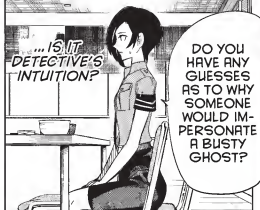


IT WAS ABOUT THEN THAT SHE SUDDENLY WENT VIRAL.

THERE WAS ENOUGH TIME BETWEEN THOSE EVENTS FOR HER TO GET READY.



THE TESTIMONIES AND REPORTS OF DIRECT DAMAGE STARTED ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO.



...IS IT
DETECTIVE'S
INTUITION?

DO YOU
HAVE ANY
GUESSES
AS TO WHY
SOMEONE
WOULD IM-
PERSONATE
A BUSTY
GHOST?

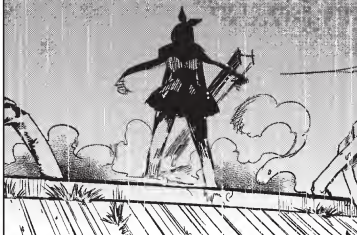


NO.



BUT
THERE IS
SOMETHING
OUT THERE.

AND
THEN SHE
STARTED
MAKING HER
MOVE.

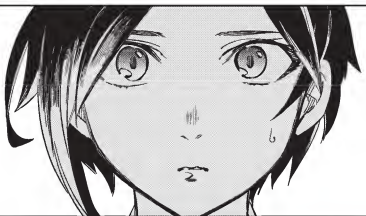


GLUG

CONSIDER-
ING THE
SITUATION,
I HAVE
TO TREAD
CAREFULLY.

IT
DOESN'T
LOOK
GOOD FOR
A COP TO
BE TAKING
RUMORS
TOO SERI-
OUSLY.

BUT...
STEEL
LADY
NANASE
IS REAL.



TERADA-
SAN SENSES
SOMETHING
OMINOUS BEHIND
THE STEEL LADY'S
APPEARANCE—
SOME BIG CRIME
ABOUT TO TAKE
PLACE.

THESE DAYS,
IT'S EASY FOR
A PROVINCIAL
TOWN LIKE OURS
TO TURN INTO A
HOTBED FOR
ORGANIZED
CRIME.

SOME-
BODY'S GOTTA
PUT OUT
FEELERS
RIGHT
NOW.

CLATTER



SHE'S NOT
PLOTTING
ANYTHING
CRIMINAL.

SHE'S
A REAL
GHOST.

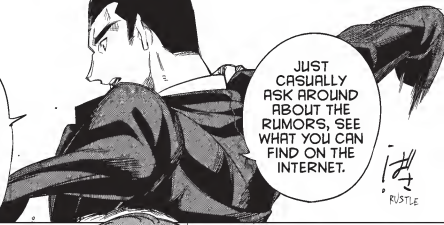


I'D
APPRECIATE
YOUR HELP.

WHATEVER
SHE'S UP TO,
THE POLICE
CAN'T STOP
HER.

CLENCH





THERE
MAY
BE A
PATTERN.

I'M
MARKING A
MAP WITH ALL
THE SPOTS
IN TOWN
WHERE STEEL
LADY NANASE
HAS BEEN
SIGHTED.

JUST
CASUALLY
ASK AROUND
ABOUT THE
RUMORS, SEE
WHAT YOU CAN
FIND ON THE
INTERNET.

RUSTLE



IT'S WHEN THEY
LUCK ABOUT
THAT YOU SENSE
SOMETHING
SINISTER AND
OMINOUS AND
GET A FEELING
THAT SOMETHING
IS ABOUT
TO HAPPEN.

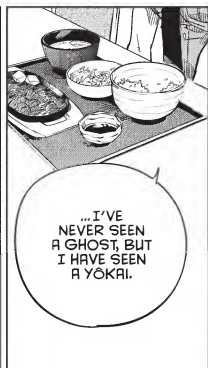
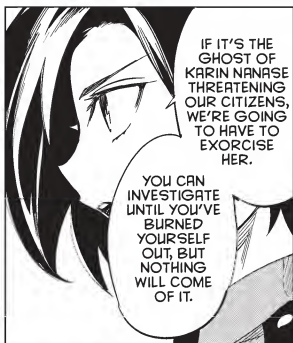


TE-
RADA-
SAN.

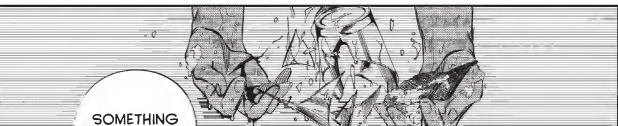
I'D
LIKE
YOU TO
CON-
SIDER...

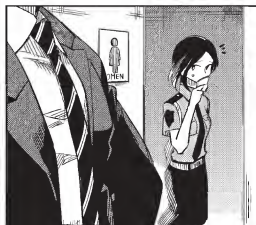


...THE
POSSIBILITY
THAT GHOSTS
AND YŌKAI
MAY ACTUALLY
EXIST IN THIS
WORLD.











SO PLEASE,
BE CARE-
FUL.

ANYWAY,
TERADA-SAN.
THERE EXIST
THINGS
BEYOND OUR
UNDERSTAND-
ING.



NO,
I'M
FINE.



I CAN'T
PUT YOU
TO THE
TROUBLE.



...ER.

NO,
IT JUST
ENDED
COMPLI-
CATED...



YOU'VE
CONVINCED
ME THAT
YOU HAD
A COM-
PLICATED
LOVE LIFE.

YEAH,
I GOT
IT.



I SAW YOU!

YUMI-HARA-SAN!



THANKS, YOU, TOO.

GOOD WORK TODAY, YUMI-HARA-SAN.

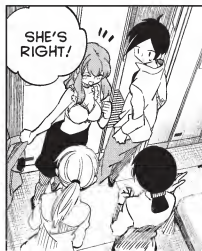


NOTHING HAPPENED.

N...

REALLY?!

WHAT?!



SHE'S RIGHT!

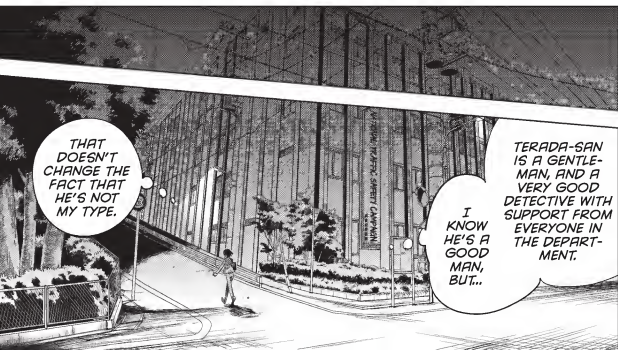
BUT TERADA-SAN'S ACTUALLY PRETTY SHY. HE'S REALLY PUSHING HIMSELF TO TALK TO YOU, YOU KNOW.

YOU MAY NOT BE INTERESTED, YUMI-HARA-SAN.



YOU WERE REALLY HITTING IT OFF WITH TERADA-SAN.

IN THE CAFETERIA AT LUNCH.





HE'S WIMPY,
A LITTLE
YOUNGER THAN
I AM, A LITTLE
SHORTER
THAN I AM.

I'D TAKE
KURŌ-KUN'S
WEAK,
SCRAWNY BACK
OVER A STONE
WALL ANY
DAY...

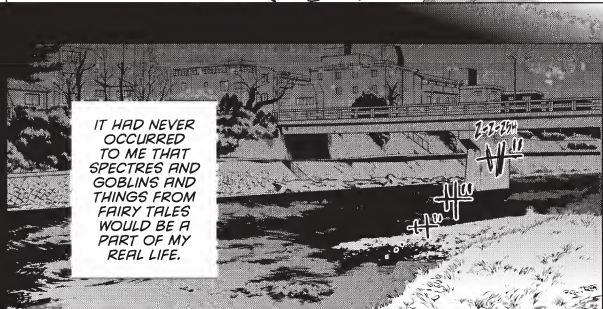
SIMPLE...
LIKE A
GOAT.



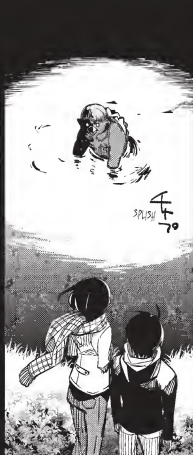
...BUT I
CAN'T.

AS MUCH AS
IT PAINS ME,
I CAN'T HELP
BUT THINK
ABOUT HIM.

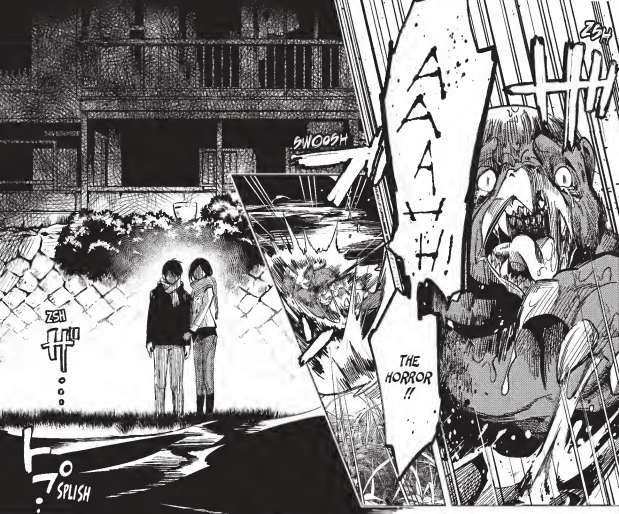
I
TRIED TO
FORGET
ABOUT
HIM...



IT HAD NEVER
OCCURRED
TO ME THAT
SPECTRES AND
GOBLINS AND
THINGS FROM
FAIRY TALES
WOULD BE A
PART OF MY
REAL LIFE.







IF ONLY WE
HADN'T RUN
INTO THAT
KAPPA.

IF ONLY WE
HADN'T GONE
ON THAT TRIP
TO KYOTO,
MAYBE I
WOULD STILL
BE WITH
KURŌ-KUN.

HOW
LONG WILL
I HAVE TO
ENDURE
THIS
MISERY?

CLACK

I LIVE IN
CONSTANT
DREAD, AND
I'VE STARTED
TO SENSE
THEM ALL
AROUND
ME.

WHAT
HAPPENED
THAT DAY
TWISTED
THE
WORLD I'D
ALWAYS
BELIEVED
IN.

COME
TO
THINK
OF IT...

HOW
CAN I
BE SO
SELF-
ISH?!

WHAT
AM
I...

GASP

I HEARD
HIS COUSIN
EVENTUALLY
PASSED
AWAY.
IF SHE HAD
DIED RIGHT
BEFORE OUR
TRIP TO
KYOTO, WE
WOULD HAVE
CANCELED
THE TRIP...

slat

...

I HAVE TO
MAKE SURE
HE DOESN'T
GET IN
TOO DEEP
WITH THE
STEEL LADY
NANASE
CASE.

I WOULD
HATE TO SEE
SOMEONE
CLOSE TO
ME GET AS
WRAPPED UP
IN THIS AS
I DID.

ANYWAY
...

I'D FEEL
BAD
LEAVING
TERADA-
SAN TO
HIS OWN
DEVICES.

CLACK
コ
ウ

CLACK
コ
ウ

WAH!

W—

TMP

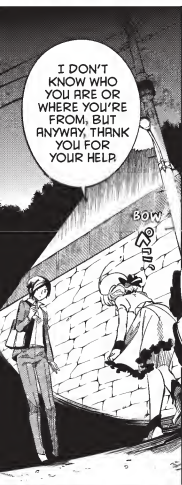
TMP

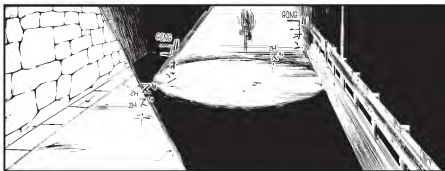
TMP

SHUPPER
シ
ッ
ッ
ッ
...

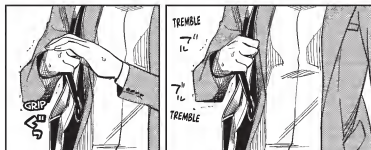
EVEN
THIS HILL
MAKES ME
NERVOUS,
AND I
CLIMB IT
EVERY
DAY.













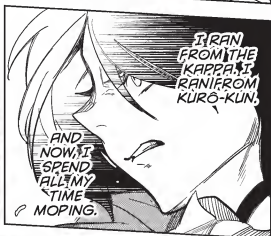
WHOOOSH

I'M
GETTING
PRETTY
TIRED OF
THESE
THINGS
MESSING
WITH MY LIFE.



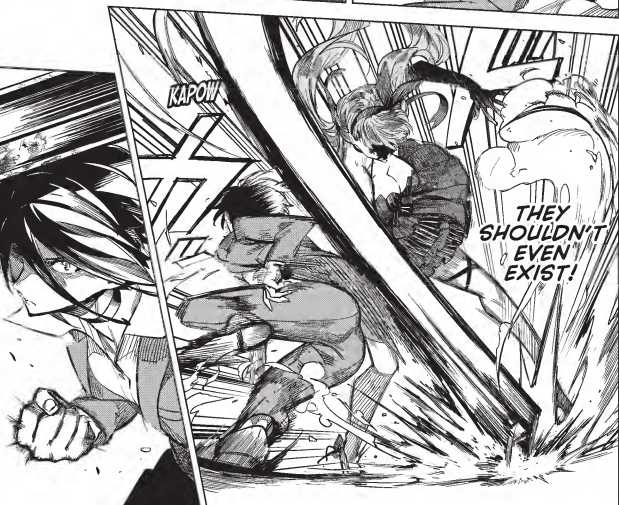
Hey!

DASH



I RAN
FROM THE
KAPPA. I
RAN FROM
KURO-KUN.

AND
NOW, I
SPEND
ALL MY
TIME
MOPING.



KAPOW

THEY
SHOULDN'T
EVEN
EXIST!



SWOO

TONIGHT
IS-THE
NIGHT.
I'M
ENDING
THIS.

WHA...

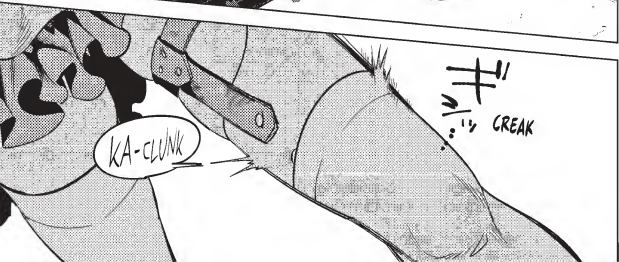


SEE?
I TOLD
YOU TO
RUN!

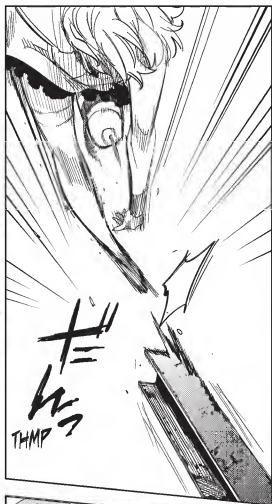


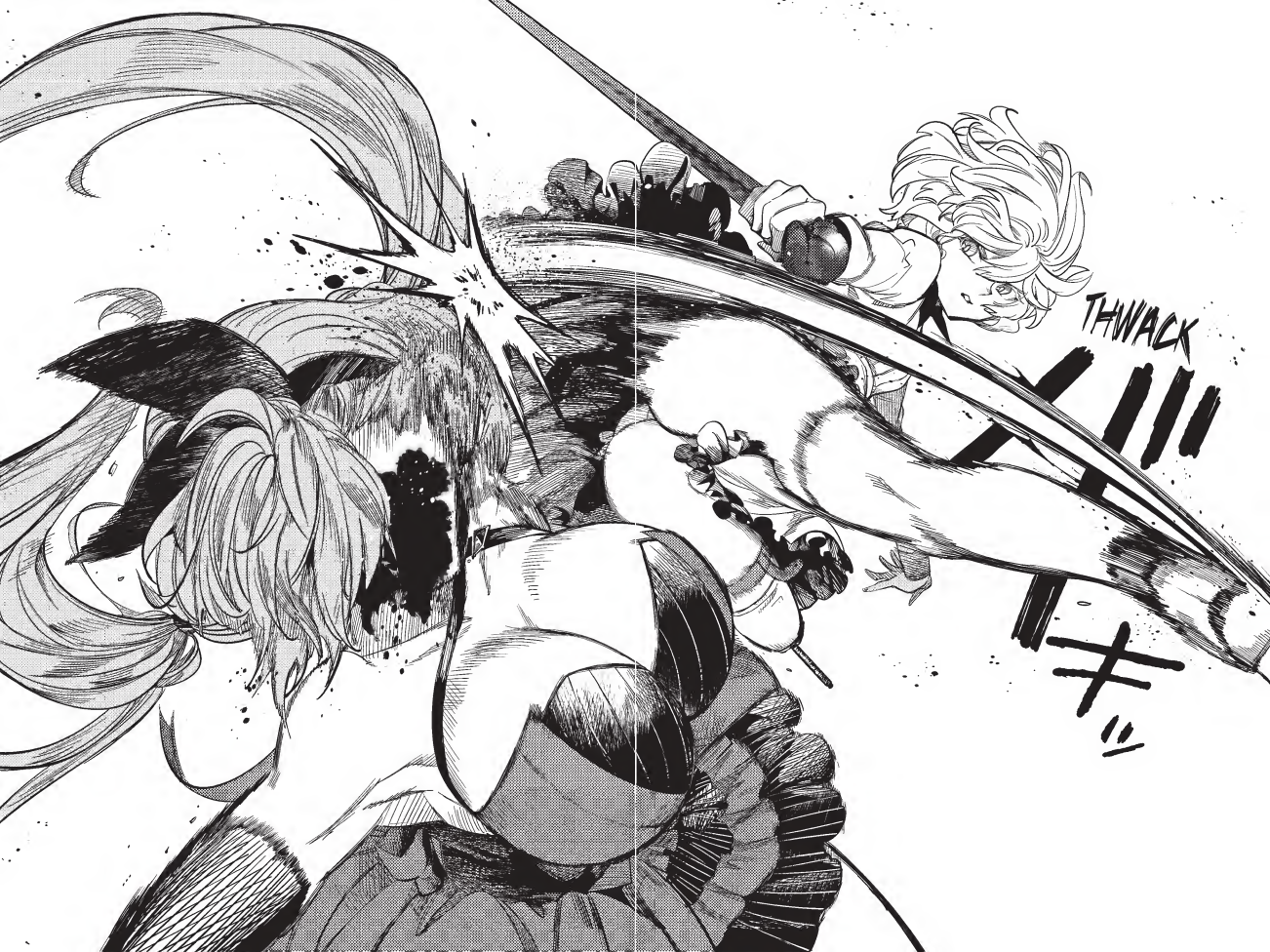
IS
INSANE.

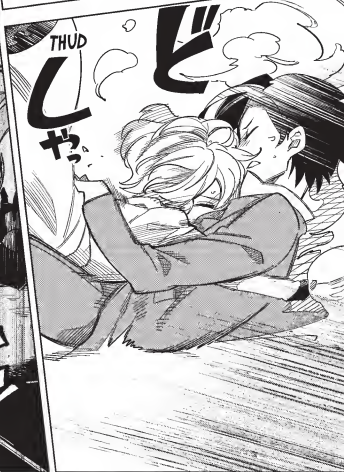
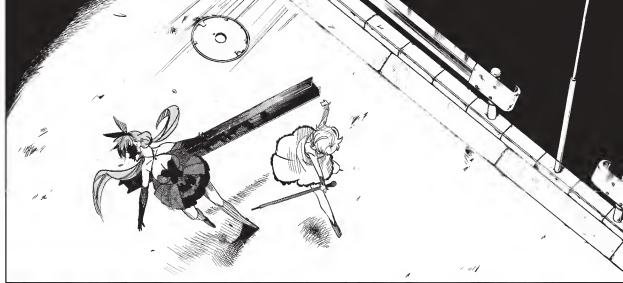
















IT
DOESN'T
MAKE
ANY
SENSE.



...SO
SHE
LEFT.

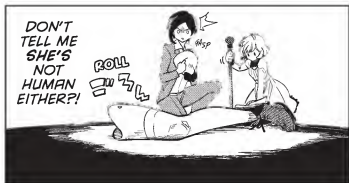
BUT I
DON'T
THINK I
CAN DEFEAT
HER WITH
FORCE...

MUTTER

MUTTER



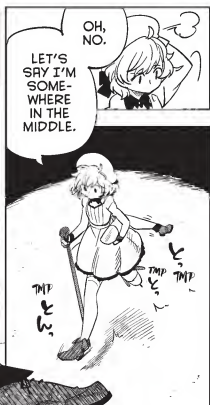
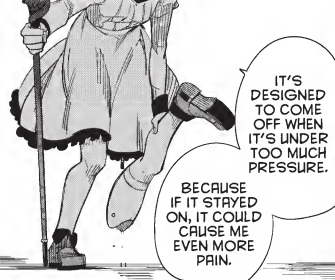
SHE CAN
TACKLE A
SPIRIT?
JUST
WHO IS
THIS
GIRL?

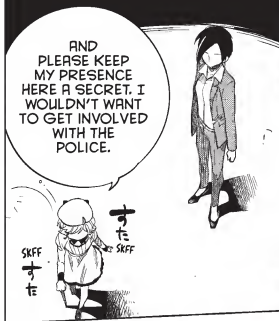


DON'T
TELL ME
SHE'S
NOT
HUMAN
EITHER?!

ROLL
UP







AND
PLEASE KEEP
MY PRESENCE
HERE A SECRET. I
WOULDN'T WANT
TO GET INVOLVED
WITH THE
POLICE.



I WILL
TAKE CARE
OF STEEL
LADY
NANASE
SOON.

THAT'S
WHY I
CAME
HERE.



YOU CAN
TELL ME
ALL ABOUT
IT AT THE
STATION.



HOW
CAN
THIS
BE?!

DU-DUN



IT'S
JUST
DOWN
THIS
HILL.



AND
I WON'T
CONTACT
YOUR
RELATIVES
WITHOUT
GOOD
REASON.

RELAX.
I WON'T
REPORT
THIS.

YOUR LEG
MAY BE FINE,
BUT YOU'RE
COVERED IN
SCRAPES AND
BRUISES. I'LL
BANDAGE
YOU UP.



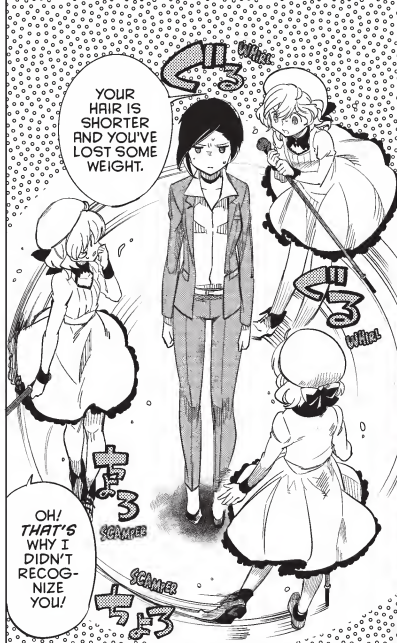
TRAFFIC
OFFICER
SAKI
YUMIHARA
...?

THE POLICE ALREADY
HAVE REPORTS OF
CASES WE BELIEVE
TO BE CONNECTED
TO THE STEEL LADY.
I CAN'T JUST
IGNORE THIS.

STARE
C



ARE YOU...
SAKI-SAN?



DO YOU
KNOW ME?

I WANT
AN EXPLA-
NATION.
ONE THAT
MAKES
SENSE.

PONK
URK!

WE HAVE MET
ONCE BEFORE,
BUT THIS IS
THE FIRST
TIME I'VE
INTRODUCED
MYSELF.

I HAVE
NO
MEMORY
OF EVER
MEETING
YOU.



**CURRENT
GIRL-
FRIEND.**

**KURŌ
SAKURA-
GAWA-
SENPŌI'S**



**MY NAME
IS KOTOKO
IWANAGA.**







As for the content of this particular volume, while the plot and dialogue are pretty much straight from the novel, there are scenes, expressions, and ideas everywhere that are unique to the manga, and it's turning into something that will have different highlights from the novel, giving readers a different impression. In fact, an acquaintance of mine read Chapter 1 and said, "It's so faithful to the novel, but so much more refreshing."

Even the same scene with the same lines will have differences; maybe it's because the humanity of the writer shows through. It's scary.

Incidentally, the title makes reference to detective work, but there is nothing resembling a mystery story in this book; instead, we have yōkai and ghosts, and on top of that, it focuses on people with powers that aren't really explained. So if anyone picked it up hoping for a mystery manga, and you're getting mad and thinking, "Are you going to have any mystery in this at all?!", then direct all your complaints to me, because it's faithful to the original.

The story should become a little more of a "mystery" as it goes on (there are police officers in it, after all). When the novel was published, I got reviews from both camps, claiming that it was a mystery novel and that it wasn't one. In regards to that, I hide behind my excuse of, "It's made of the same substance as mystery."

That's really not very refreshing, is it?

Well, I hope you'll read the next volume.

Kyo Shirodaira

I am Kyo Shirodaira, the one credited on the cover and frontispiece as writing the "story." This is volume one. To those of you who know my name and those who don't, thank you for picking up this book.

Now, this manga, known as *In/Spectre*, is the graphic novel version of the story I wrote as a novel in 2011, and published as *Invented Inference: Steel Lady Nanase*. At the time that I was writing the novel, I had no idea that it would become a manga.

And this time, I didn't write any new scenarios or tweak the continuity like I often do with manga of my work; I just gave Chashiba Katase-sensei the book and said, "Don't worry about my feelings at all, just draw whatever you think is interesting in whatever way you think it's interesting. If possible, I'd prefer you don't make it too serious." It's a pretty different relationship than what I usually have with a manga artist.

Because Chapter 1 was the first one, and we were just starting out, I did make some comments before it was drawn about some lines of dialogue and the story details, but other than that, I had no idea what was going on with it until it was published in the magazine. I just sat back and thought to myself, "Wow, I'm not doing anything, but this is really turning into a good manga. There are more good scenes than there were before." Part of my lack of involvement comes from a fear that, since the story already exists as a published novel, if I were to get too involved, the manga would be constrained by the novel. I felt it would be a better manga if I left it to someone else's interpretation and story sense.



THE TALE OF A KAPPA COMING ASHORE

Much obliged to you for buyin' volume one.

SIIIIGH.

BUT, MY OH MY, I HAD SUCH A FRIGHT BACK AT NEW YEAR'S.

Oof.

YO!

I'M THE KAMO RIVER KAPPA.

STORY, ART: CHASHIBA KATASE

KOTOKO

SIGH... ANYWAY, HER LADYSHIP IS SO LOVELY.

JUST WHAT IS THAT CREATURE?

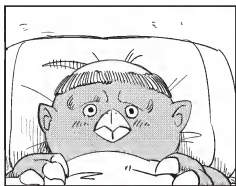
I SIMPLY COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO EAT TO TURN OUT LIKE THAT?

IT'S DOWN-RIGHT SCARY!

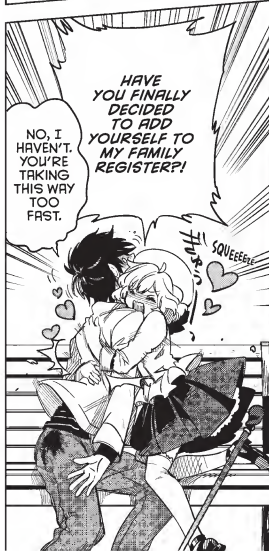
I'LL JUST FORGET ALL ABOUT IT.

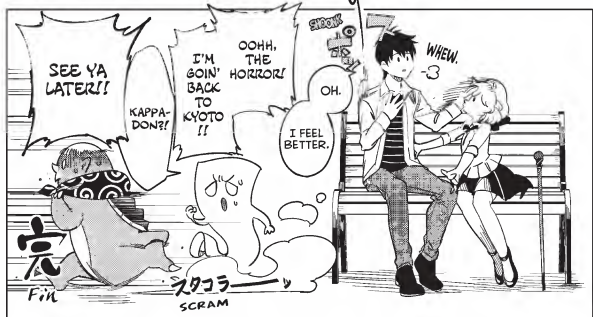
WHEW

WELL, WHATEVER. IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS.









Thank you very much!
I hope you'll read volume two. (smile)

Staff: Kuro Shima, Tonpu, Yutsu

Editors: O-kawa, T-da (marathon eschewed)

TRANSLATION NOTES

Japanese is a tricky language for most Westerners, and translation is often more art than science. For your edification and reading pleasure, here are notes on some of the places where we could have gone in a different direction in our translation of the work, or where a Japanese cultural reference is used.

Eating grass, page 12

There may be some significance to this observation that Kurô is like an herbivorous goat. In recent years, the Japanese word for "herbivore" has been applied to men who are low on carnal ("carnivorous") desires. In other words, Kurô doesn't actively seek out romantic relationships.

Oni, page 13

An *oni* is a creature from Japanese folklore. The word is often translated to "ogre", as *oni* do tend to be ugly man-eaters. *Oni* come in many shapes and sizes, but one thing they have in common is horns. Some have only one horn, but the most common depictions of *oni* have two, much like a goat. The word *oni* is also used to describe people who are tough, unsparing, and/or heartless.



Engagement ceremony, page 19

When a couple gets engaged in Japan, it is tradition to have a formal dinner during which the parents of the soon-to-be married couple exchange symbolic gifts. These gifts all represent things such as a long-lasting marriage, happiness, good fortune, etc. If Kurô and Saki are planning such a ceremony, it means both of their parents have agreed to the match, and there's little chance that either of them will back out.



Kotoko Iwanaga means..., page 24

Kotoko isn't necessarily assuming that Kurô would have any interest in what her name means, or that the meaning of her name will impress him in any way. Because the Japanese writing system uses ideographs (one symbol that represents a word or idea), the meaning of her name would tell him which characters to use to write it. She's basically telling him how to write or "spell" her name, in case he ever decides to look her up.

First temple visit, and the New Year's Bell, page 32

In Japan, it's a New Year's tradition to visit a shrine or temple within the first three days of the new year, to express gratitude for the previous year and pray for a good new year. The New Year's Bell is rung 108 times, around midnight on New Year's Eve. One theory as to why this is, is that the number 108 represents the types of worldly desires that exist in the world, and hearing the bell ring can purify your heart of those worldly desires that had built up over the last year. However, the number of rings can vary from temple to temple, sometimes ringing more than 200 times.



Gatarô, suiko, and hyôsube, page 33

As the reader may have guessed from the context, these are all supernatural water creatures, like the more well-known kappa. All of them live by rivers and interact with humans with varying degrees of hostility. As an expert in regard to all Japanese supernatural creatures, Kotoko wants to make sure she has all the details right.



Sushi and shrimp crackers, page 34

Kotoko is referring to the fact that there is a popular chain of sushi restaurants called Kappa-Zushi, and a brand of shrimp flavored crackers which also bears the name of the aquatic creatures.



Kannon, page 53

Kannon, or Guanyin, is a bodhisattva—one who has attained Nirvana but has come back to earth to help show others the way. She is also considered a goddess of mercy, including leading souls of the deceased toward the pure land. In other words, Kotoko is going to enlist her help to send this ghost to nirvana.

The Warrior's Way to My Heart, page 53

The translators confess that this is not a direct translation of this particular novel title, but such is the way of translating book and movie titles. The Japanese title of the book is *Mushaburui LOVE*, where *mushaburui* means "trembling with excitement or anticipation," but this particular ghost would be attracted to the *musha* part, which means "warrior." The translators chose to focus on that as the main point of the English title.

Good things come to those who sleep, page 59

Here, Kotoko is accurately reciting the Japanese version of "good things come to those who wait", which translates more literally to, "If you want good fortune, go to sleep and wait for it." Unfortunately, the English version doesn't include the part about sleep, so the translators had to tweak it a little.

Tea lunch, page 64

More accurately, Kotoko states that she has eaten a *kaiseki* meal. *Kaiseki* is a very high-class Japanese cuisine, and usually consists of miso soup and three side dishes. When written with the Chinese characters that Kotoko used, it refers to a meal served in conjunction with a formal tea ceremony. In keeping with the high level of the meal, Kyoto heirloom vegetables, or *kyô yasai*, are expensive vegetables served mainly in upscale restaurants, and they are very nutritious.

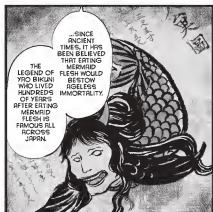
Baké-Danuki, page 66

A tanuki is a Japanese raccoon dog. While tanuki are normal, everyday animals, a *baké-danuki* (or "transforming tanuki") is supernatural one capable of shapeshifting.



Protective barrier, page 66

The word our tanuki friend uses here for "protective barrier" is *kekkaï*, literally "bound world." Often translated to "barrier," a *kekkaï* is a boundary marking off the border between the sacred and the profane. The area inside the barrier is supposed to be protected from harm.



Yao Bikuni, page 92

Although Kotoko relates the significant parts of the tale, the reader may be interested in a slightly more detailed account of Yao Bikuni. There are regional differences to the story, but the gist of it is that a man was invited to dinner at a fisherman's house and discovered by chance that the fisherman was serving mermaid meat. Repulsed at the idea, he didn't eat the meat but wrapped it up and took it home to discard later. Either his daughter or his wife then ate the meat before he could warn her not to, and lived for centuries thereafter. After being widowed several times

and losing all her friends, she became a nun and traveled the country, helping the poor.

Police boxes, page 119

Police boxes, loosely translated from *kôban*, are like miniature police stations, spread throughout the community, bringing the police close to the community so they can respond more readily to the citizens' needs.

Pleasure crime, page 122

A "pleasure crime," or *yukaihan*, is committed by someone who does it just to get a rise out of people, or for the fun of it.

Should I take her in, page 142

Specifically, Saki wonders if she should *hodô* Kotoko. The purpose of *hodô*, which means "guidance," is to identify minors who are committing—or look like they might commit—a crime, and to provide guidance to prevent them from resorting to such behavior. Kotoko is suspicious because she is out late at night, when most good children would be at home.



The Kamo River Kappa, page 166

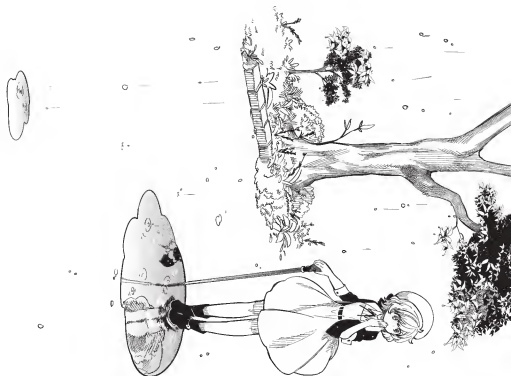


This kappa is a native of Kyoto, and although he used the standard Japanese dialect in the main story, here in the bonus manga, he speaks with a Kyoto dialect. The dialects from this region of Japan are often translated into an American Southern dialect. This is because people from this region are seen by the Japanese in a similar way as people from the

American South are seen by residents of the United States—some are simple and humorous, while others are refined and proud.

Shirikodama, page 170

Translated roughly as "rear-end jewel," a *shirikodama* is a mythical crystal believed to exist in humans' anuses. According to legend, the reason kappa attack people is to obtain this jewel.



In/Spectre 1

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